DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

The Grain of Dust

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The

GRAIN OF DUST

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"'I will teach you to love me,' he cried."

[Page 135.]

The Grain of Dust

A NOVEL

BY
DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

AUTHOR OF
THE FASHIONABLE ADVENTURES OF
JOSHUA CRAIG, OLD WIVES FOR NEW,
THE HUSBAND'S STORY, ETC.

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THE GRAIN OF DUST

I

Into the offices of Lockyer, Sanders, Benchley, Lockyer & Norman, corporation lawyers, there drifted on a December afternoon a girl in search of work at stenography and typewriting. The firm was about the most important and most famous—radical orators often said infamous—in New York. The girl seemed, at a glance, about as unimportant and obscure an atom as the city hid in its vast ferment. She was blonde—tawny hair, fair skin, blue eyes. Aside from this hardly conclusive mark of identity there was nothing positive, nothing definite, about her. She was neither tall nor short, neither fat nor thin, neither grave nor gay. She gave the impression of a young person of the feminine gender — that, and nothing more. She was plainly dressed, like thousands of other girls, in darkish blue jacket and skirt and white shirt waist. Her boots and gloves were neat, her hair simply and well arranged. Perhaps in these respects—in neatness and taste—she did excel the average, which is depressingly low. But in a city where more or less strikingly pretty women, bent upon being seen, are as plentiful as the blackberries of Kentucky's July—in New York no one would

have given her a second look, this quiet young woman screened in an atmosphere of self-effacement.

She applied to the head clerk. It so happened that need for another typewriter had just arisen. She got a trial, showed enough skill to warrant the modest wage of ten dollars a week; she became part of the office force of twenty or twenty-five young men and women similarly employed. As her lack of skill was compensated by industry and regularity, she would have a job so long as business did not slacken. When it did, she would be among the first to be let go. She shrank into her obscure niche in the great firm, came and went in mouse-like fashion, said little, obtruded herself never, was all but forgotten.

Nothing could have been more commonplace, more trivial than the whole incident. The name of the girl was Hallowell—Miss Hallowell. On the chief clerk's pay roll appeared the additional information that her first name was Dorothea. The head office boy, in one of his occasional spells of "freshness," addressed her as Miss Dottie. She looked at him with a puzzled expression; it presently changed to a slight, sweet smile, and she went about her business. There was no rebuke in her manner; she was far too self-effacing for anything so positive as the mildest rebuke. But the head office boy blushed awkwardly—why he did not know and could not discover, though he often cogitated upon it. She remained Miss Hallowell.

Opposites suggest each other. The dimmest personality in those offices was the girl whose name imaged to everyone little more than a pencil, notebook, and typewriting machine. The vividest personality was Frederick Norman. In the list of names upon the outer doors of the firm's vast labyrinthine suite, on the seventeenth floor of the Syndicate Building, his name came last—and, in the newest lettering, suggesting recentness of partnership. In age he was the youngest of the partners. Lockyer was archaic, Sanders an antique; Benchley, actually only about fifty-five, had the air of one born in the grandfather class. Lockyer the son dyed his hair and affected jauntiness, but was in fact not many years younger than Benchley and had the stiffening jerky legs of one paying for a lively youth. Norman was thirty-seven—at the age the Greeks extolled as divine because it means all the best of youth combined with all the best of manhood. Some people thought Norman younger, almost boyish. Those knew him uptown only, where he hid the man of affairs beneath the man of the world-that-amuses-itself. Some people thought he looked, and was, older than the age with which the biographical notices credited him. They knew him down town only—where he dominated by sheer force of intellect and will.

As has been said, the firm ranked among the greatest in New York. It was a trusted counselor in large affairs—commercial, financial, political—in all parts of

America, in all parts of the globe, for many of its clients were international traffickers. Yet this young man, this youngest and most recent of the partners, had within the month forced a reorganization of the firm—or, rather, of its profits—on a basis that gave him no less than one half of the whole.

His demand threw his four associates into paroxysms of rage and fear—the fear serving as a wholesome antidote to the rage.

It certainly was infuriating that a youth, admitted to partnership barely three years ago, should thus maltreat his associates. Ingrate was precisely the epithet for him. At least, so they honestly thought, after the quaint human fashion; for, because they had given him the partnership, they looked on themselves as his benefactors, and neglected as unimportant detail the sole and entirely selfish reason for their graciousness. But enraged though these worthy gentlemen were, and eagerly though they longed to treat the "conceited and grasping upstart" as he richly deserved, they accepted his ultimatum. Even the venerable and venerated Lockyer — than whom a more convinced self-deceiver on the subject of his own virtues never wore white whiskers, black garments, and the other badges of eminent respectability—even old Joseph Lockyer could not twist the acceptance into another manifestation of the benevolence of himself and his associates. They had to stare the grimacing truth straight in the

face; they were yielding because they dared not refuse. To refuse would mean the departure of Norman with the firm's most profitable business. It costs heavily to live in New York; the families of successful men are extravagant; so conduct unbecoming a gentleman may not there be resented if to resent is to cut down one's income. The time was, as the dignified and nicely honorable Sanders observed, when these and many similar low standards did not prevail in the legal profession. But such is the frailty of human nature—or so savage the pressure of the need of the material necessities of civilized life, let a profession become profitable or develop possibilities of profit — even the profession of statesman, even that of lawyer—or doctor—or priest—or wife—and straightway it begins to tumble down toward the brawl and stew of the market place.

In a last effort to rouse the gentleman in Norman or to shame him into pretense of gentlemanliness, Lockyer expostulated with him like a prophet priest in full panoply of saintly virtue. And Lockyer was passing good at that exalted gesture. He was a Websterian figure, with the venality of the great Daniel in all its pompous dignity modernized—and correspondingly expanded. He abounded in those idealist sonorosities that are the stock-in-trade of all solemn old-fashioned frauds. The young man listened with his wonted attentive courtesy until the dolorous appeal disguised as fatherly counsel came to an end. Then in his blue-gray eyes

appeared the gleam that revealed the tenacity and the penetration of his mind. He said:

"Mr. Lockyer, you have been absent six years—except an occasional two or three weeks—absent as American Ambassador to France. You have done nothing for the firm in that time. Yet you have not scorned to take profits you did not earn. Why should I scorn to take profits I do earn?"

Mr. Lockyer shook his picturesque head in sad remonstrance at this vulgar, coarse, but latterly frequent retort of insurgent democracy upon indignant aristocracy. But he answered nothing.

"Also," proceeded the graceless youth in the clear and concise way that won the instant attention of juries and judges, "also, our profession is no longer a profession but a business." His humorous eyes twinkled merrily. "It divides into two parts—teaching capitalists how to loot without being caught, and teaching them how to get off if by chance they have been caught. There are other branches of the profession, but they're not lucrative, so *we* do not practice them. Do I make myself clear?"

Mr. Lockyer again shook his head and sighed.

"I am not an Utopian," continued young Norman. "Law and custom permit—not to say sanctify—our sort of business. So—I do my best. But I shall not conceal from you that it's distasteful to me. I wish to get out of it. I shall get out as soon as I've made enough

capital to assure me the income I have and need. Naturally, I wish to gather in the necessary amount as speedily as possible."

"Fred, my boy, I regret that you take such low views of our noble profession."

"Yes—as a profession it is noble. But not as a practice. *My* regret is that it invites and compels such low views."

"You will look at these things more—more mellowly when you are older."

"I doubt if I'll ever rise very high in the art of self-deception," replied Norman. "If I'd had any bent that way I'd not have got so far so quickly."

It was a boastful remark—of a kind he, and other similar young men, have the habit of making. But from him it did not sound boastful—simply a frank and timely expression of an indisputable truth, which indeed it was. Once more Mr. Lockyer sighed. "I see you are incorrigible," said he.

"I have not acted without reflection," said Norman.

And Lockyer knew that to persist was simply to endanger his dignity. "I am getting old," said he. "Indeed, I *am* old. I have gotten into the habit of leaning on you, my boy. I can't consent to your going, hard though you make it for us to keep you. I shall try to persuade our colleagues to accept your terms."

Norman showed neither appreciation nor triumph. He merely bowed slightly. And so the matter was

settled. Instead of moving into the suite of offices in the Mills Building on which he had taken an option, young Norman remained where he had been toiling for twelve years.

After this specimen of Norman's quality, no one will be surprised to learn that in figure he was one of those solidly built men of medium height who look as if they were made to sustain and to deliver shocks, to bear up easily under heavy burdens; or that his head thickly covered with fairish hair, was hatchet-shaped with the helve or face suggesting that while it could and would cleave any obstacle, it would wear a merry if somewhat sardonic smile the while. No one had ever seen Norman angry, though a few persevering offenders against what he regarded as his rights had felt the results of swift and powerful action of the same sort that is usually accompanied—and weakened—by outward show of anger. Invariably good-humored, he was soon seen to be more dangerous than the men of flaring temper. In most instances good humor of this unbreakable species issues from weakness, from a desire to conciliate—usually with a view to plucking the more easily. Norman's good humor arose from a sense of absolute security which in turn was the product of confidence in himself and amiable disdain for his fellow men. The masses he held in derision for permitting the classes to rule and rob and spit upon them. The classes he scorned for caring to occupy themselves with so cheap

and sordid a game as the ruling, robbing, and spitting aforesaid. Coming down to the specific, he despised men as individuals because he had always found in each and everyone of them a weakness that made it easy for him to use them as he pleased.

Not an altogether pleasant character, this. But not so unpleasant as it may seem to those unable impartially to analyze human character, even their own—especially their own. And let anyone who is disposed to condemn Norman first look within himself—in some less hypocritical and self-deceiving moment, if he have such moments—and let him note what are the qualities he relies upon and uses in his own struggle to save himself from being submerged and sunk. Further, there were in Norman many agreeable qualities, important, but less fundamental, therefore less deep-hidden—therefore generally regarded as the real man and as the cause of his success in which they in fact had almost no part. He was, for example, of striking physical appearance, was attractively dressed and mannered, was prodigally generous. Neither as lawyer nor as man did he practice justice. But while as lawyer he practiced injustice, as man he practiced mercy. Whenever a weakling appealed to him for protection, he gave it—at times with splendid recklessness as to the cost to himself in antagonisms and enmities. Indeed, so great were the generosities of his character that, had he not been arrogant, disdainful, self-confident, reso-

lutely and single-heartedly ambitious, he must inevitably have ruined himself—if he had ever been able to rise high enough to be worthy the dignity of catastrophe.

Successful men are usually trying persons to know well. Lambs, asses, and chickens do not associate happily with lions, wolves, and hawks—nor do birds and beasts of prey get on well with one another. Norman was regarded as "difficult" by his friends—by those of them who happened to get into the path of his ambition, in front of instead of behind him, and by those who fell into the not unnatural error of misunderstanding his good nature and presuming upon it. His clients regarded him as insolent. The big businesses, seeking the rich spoils of commerce, frequent highly perilous waters. They need skillful pilots. Usually these lawyer-pilots "know their place" and put on no airs upon the quarter-deck while they are temporarily in command. Not so Norman. He took the full rank, authority—and emoluments—of commander. And as his power, fame, and income were swiftly growing, it is fair to assume that he knew what he was about.

He was admired—extravagantly admired—by young men with not too broad a vein of envy. He was no woman hater—anything but that. Indeed, those who wished him ill had from time to time hoped to see him tumble down, through miscalculation in some of his audacities with women. No—he did not hate women.

But there were several women who hated him—or tried to; and if wounded vanity and baffled machination be admitted as just causes for hatred, they had cause. He liked—but he did not wholly trust. When he went to sleep, it was not where Delilah could wield the shears. A most irritating prudence—irritating to friends and intimates of all degrees and kinds, in a race of beings with a mania for being trusted implicitly but with no balancing mania for deserving trust of the implicit variety.

And he ate hugely—and whatever he pleased. He could drink beyond belief, all sorts of things, with no apparent ill effect upon either body or brain. He had all the appetites developed abnormally, and abnormal capacity for gratifying them. Where there was one man who envied him his eminence, there were a dozen who envied him his physical capacities. We cannot live and act without doing mischief, as well as that which most of us would rather do, provided that in the doing we are not ourselves undone. Probably in no direction did Norman do so much mischief as in unconsciously leading men of his sets down town and up to imitate his colossal dissipations—which were not dissipation for him who was abnormal.

Withal, he was a monster for work. There is not much truth in men's unending talk of how hard they work or are worked. The ravages from their indulgences in smoking, drinking, gallantry, eating too much

and too fast and too often, have to be explained away creditably, to themselves and to others—notably to the wives or mothers who nurse them and suffer from their diminishing incomes. Hence the wailing about work. But once in a while a real worker appears—a man with enormous ingenuity at devising difficult tasks for himself and with enormous persistence in doing them. Frederick Norman was one of these blue-moon prodigies.

Obviously, such a man could not but be observed and talked about. Endless stories, some of them more or less true, most of them apocryphal, were told of him—stories of his shrewd, unexpected moves in big cases, of his witty retorts, of his generosities, of his peculiarities of dress, of eating and drinking; stories of his adventures with women. Whatever he did, however trivial, took color and charm from his personality, so easy yet so difficult, so simple yet so complex, so baffling. Was he wholly selfish? Was he a friend to almost anybody or to nobody? Did he ever love? No one knew, not even himself, for life interested him too intensely and too incessantly to leave him time for self-analysis. One thing he was certain of; he hated nobody, envied nobody. He was too successful for that.

He did as he pleased. And, on the whole, he pleased to do far less inconsiderately than his desires, his abilities, and his opportunities tempted. Have not men been acclaimed good for less?

In the offices, where he was canvased daily by part-

ners, clerks, everyone down to the cleaners whose labors he so often delayed, opinion varied from day to day. They worshiped him; they hated him. They loved him; they feared him. They regarded him as more than human, as less than human; but never as just human—though always as endowed with fine human virtues and even finer human weaknesses. Miss Tillotson, next to the head clerk in rank and pay—and a pretty and pushing young person—dreamed of getting acquainted with him—really well acquainted. It was a vain dream. For him, between up town and down town a great gulf was fixed. Also, he had no interest in or ammunition for sparrows.

It was in December that Miss Hallowell—Miss Dorothea Hallowell—got her temporary place at ten dollars a week—that obscure event, somewhat like a field mouse taking quarters in a horizon-bounded grain field. It was not until mid-February that she, the palest of personalities, came into direct contact with Norman, about the most refulgent. This is how it happened.

Late in that February afternoon, an hour or more after the last of the office force should have left, Norman threw open the door of his private office and glanced round at the rows on rows of desks. The lights in the big room were on, apparently only because he was still within. With an exclamation of disappointment he turned to reënter his office. He heard the click of type-

writer keys. Again he looked round, but could see no one.

"Isn't there some one here?" he cried. "Don't I hear a typewriter?"

The noise stopped. There was a slight rustling from a far corner, beyond his view, and presently he saw advancing a slim and shrinking slip of a girl with a face that impressed him only as small and insignificant. In a quiet little voice she said, "Yes, sir. Do you wish anything?"

"Why, what are you doing here?" he asked. "I don't think I've ever seen you before."

"Yes. I took dictation from you several times," replied she.

He was instantly afraid he might have hurt her feelings, and he, who in the days when he was far, far less than now, had often suffered from that commonplace form of brutality, was most careful not to commit it. "I never know what's going on round me when I'm thinking," explained he, though he was saying to himself that the next time he would probably again be unable to remember one with nothing distinctive to fix identity. "You are—Miss——?"

"Miss Hallowell."

"How do you happen to be here? I've given particular instructions that no one is ever to be detained after hours."

A little color appeared in the pale, small face—and

now he saw that she had a singularly fair and smooth skin, singularly beautiful—and he wondered why he had not noticed it before. Being a close observer, he had long ago noted and learned to appreciate the wonders of that most amazing of tissues, the human skin; and he had come to be a connoisseur. "I'm staying of my own accord," said she.

"They ought not to give you so much work," said he. "I'll speak about it."

Into the small face came the look of the frightened child—a fascinating look. And suddenly he saw that she had lovely eyes, clear, expressive, innocent. "Please don't," she pleaded, in the gentle quiet voice. "It isn't overwork. I did a brief so badly that I was ashamed to hand it in. I'm doing it again."

He laughed, and a fine frank laugh he had when he was in the mood. At once a smile lighted up her face, danced in her eyes, hovered bewitchingly about her lips—and he wondered why he had not at first glance noted how sweet and charmingly fresh her mouth was. "Why, she's beautiful," he said to himself, the manly man's inevitable interest in feminine charm wide awake. "Really beautiful. If she had a figure—and were tall—" As he thought thus, he glanced at her figure. A figure? Tall? She certainly was tall—no, she wasn't—yes, she was. No, not tall from head to foot, but with the most captivating long lines—long throat, long bust, long arms, long in body and in legs

—long and slender—yet somehow not tall. He—all this took but an instant—returned his glance to her face. He was startled. The beauty had fled, leaving not a trace behind. Before him wavered once more a small insignificance. Even her skin now seemed commonplace.

She was saying, "Did you wish me to do something?"

"Yes—a letter. Come in," he said abruptly.

Once more the business in hand took possession of his mind. He became unconscious of her presence. He dictated slowly, carefully choosing his words, for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then he stopped and paced up and down, revolving a new idea, a new phase of the business, that had flashed upon him. When he had his thoughts once more in form he turned toward the girl, the mere machine. He gazed at her in amazement. When he had last looked, he had seen an uninteresting nonentity. But that was not this person, seated before him in the same garments and with the same general blondness. That person had been a girl. This time the transformation was not into the sweet innocence of lovely childhood, but into something incredibly different. He was gazing now at a woman, a beautiful world-weary woman, one who had known the joys and then the sorrows of life and love. Heavy were the lids of the large eyes gazing mournfully into infinity—gazing upon the graves of a life, the long, long vista of buried joys. Never had he seen anything so sad or so lovely

as her mouth. The soft, smooth skin was not merely pale; its pallor was that of wakeful nights, of weeping until there were no more tears to drain away.

"Miss Hallowell—" he began.

She startled; and like the flight of an interrupted dream, the woman he had been seeing vanished. There sat the commonplace young person he had first seen. He said to himself: "I must be a little off my base to-night," and went on with the dictation. When he finished she withdrew to transcribe the letter on the typewriter. He seated himself at his desk and plunged into the masses of documents. He lost the sense of his surroundings until she stood beside him holding the typewritten pages. He did not glance up, but seized the sheets to read and sign.

"You may go," said he. "I am very much obliged to you." And he contrived, as always, to put a suggestion of genuineness into the customary phrase.

"I'm afraid it's not good work," said she. "I'll wait to see if I am to do any of it over."

"No, thank you," said he. And he looked up—to find himself gazing at still another person, wholly different from any he had seen before. The others had all been women—womanly women, full of the weakness, the delicateness rather, that distinguishes the feminine. This woman he was looking at now had a look of strength. He had thought her frail. He was seeing a strong woman—a splendidly healthy body, with sinews

of steel most gracefully covered by that fair smooth skin of hers. And her features, too—why, this girl was a person of character, of will.

He glanced through the pages. "All right—thank you," he said hastily. "Please don't stay any longer. Leave the other thing till to-morrow."

"No—it has to be done to-night."

"But I insist upon your going."

She hesitated, said quietly, "Very well," and turned to go.

"And you mustn't do it at home, either."

She made no reply, but waited respectfully until it was evident he wished to say no more, then went out. He bundled together his papers, sealed and stamped and addressed his letter, put on his overcoat and hat and crossed the outer office on his way to the door. It was empty; she was gone. He descended in the elevator to the street, remembered that he had not locked one of his private cases, returned. As he opened the outer door he heard the sound of typewriter keys. In the corner, the obscure, sheltered corner, sat the girl, bent with childlike gravity over her typewriter. It was an amusing and a touching sight—she looked so young and so solemnly in earnest.

"Didn't I tell you to go home?" he called out, with mock sternness.

Up she sprang, her hand upon her heart. And once more she was beautiful, but once more it was in a way

startlingly, unbelievably different from any expression he had seen before.

"Now, really, Miss—" He had forgotten her name. "You must not stay on here. We aren't such slave drivers as all that. Go home, please. I'll take the responsibility."

She had recovered her equanimity. In her quiet, gentle voice—but it no longer sounded weak or insignificant—she said, "You are very kind, Mr. Norman. But I must finish my work."

"Haven't I said I'd take the blame?"

"But you can't," replied she. "I work badly. I seem to learn slowly. If I fall behind, I shall lose my place—sooner or later. It was that way with the last place I had. If you interfered, you'd only injure me. I've had experience. And—I must not lose my place."

One of the scrub women thrust her mussy head and ragged, shapeless body in at the door. With a start Norman awoke to the absurdity of his situation—and to the fact that he was placing the girl in a compromising position. He shrugged his shoulders, went in and locked the cabinet, departed.

"What a queer little insignificance she is!" thought he, and dismissed her from mind.

II

Many and fantastic are the illusions the human animal, in its ignorance and its optimism, devises to change life from a pleasant journey along a plain road into a fumbling and stumbling and struggling about in a fog. Of these hallucinations the most grotesque is that the weak can come together, can pass a law to curb the strong, can set one of their number to enforce it, may then disperse with no occasion further to trouble about the strong. Every line of every page of history tells how the strong—the nimble-witted, the farsighted, the ambitious—have worked their will upon their feebler and less purposeful fellow men, regardless of any and all precautions to the contrary. Conditions have improved only because the number of the strong has increased. With so many lions at war with each other not a few rabbits contrive to avoid perishing in the nest.

Norman's genius lay in ability to take away from an adversary the legal weapons implicitly relied upon and to arm his client with them. No man understood better than he the abysmal distinction between law and justice; no man knew better than he how to compel—

or to assist—courts to apply the law, so just in the general, to promoting injustice in the particular. And whenever he permitted conscience a voice in his internal debates—it was not often—he heard from it its usual servile approbation: How can the reign of justice be more speedily brought about than by making the reign of law—lawyer law—intolerable?

About a fortnight after the trifling incident related in the previous chapter, Norman had to devise a secret agreement among several of the most eminent of his clients. They wished to band together, to do a thing expressly forbidden by the law; they wished to conspire to lower wages and raise prices in several railway systems under their control. But none would trust the others; so there must be something in writing, laid away in a secret safety deposit box along with sundry bundles of securities put up as forfeit, all in the custody of Norman. When he had worked out in his mind and in fragmentary notes the details of their agreement, he was ready for some one to do the clerical work. The some one must be absolutely trustworthy, as the plain language of the agreement would make clear to the dullest mind dazzling opportunities for profit—not only in stock jobbing but also in blackmail. He rang for Tetlow, the head clerk. Tetlow—smooth and sly and smug, lacking only courageous initiative to make him a great lawyer, but, lacking that, lacking all—Tetlow entered and closed the door behind him.

Norman leaned back in his desk chair and laced his fingers behind his head. "One of your typewriters is a slight blonde girl—sits in the corner to the far left—if she's still here."

"Miss Hallowell," said Tetlow. "We are letting her go at the end of this week. She's nice and ladylike, and willing—in fact, most anxious to please. But the work's too difficult for her. She's rather—rather—well, not exactly stupid, but slow."

"Um," said Norman reflectively. "There's Miss Bostwick—perhaps she'll do."

"Miss Bostwick got married last week."

Norman smiled. He remembered the girl because she was the oldest and homeliest in the office. "There's somebody for everybody—eh, Tetlow?"

"He was a lighthouse keeper," said Tetlow. "There's a story that he advertised for a wife. But that may be a joke."

"Why not that Miss—Miss Halloway?" mused Norman.

"Miss Hallowell," corrected Tetlow.

"Hallowell—yes. Is she—*very* incompetent?

"Not exactly that. But business is slackening—and she's been only temporary—and——"

Norman cut him off with, "Send her in."

"You don't wish her dismissed? I haven't told her yet."

"Oh, I'm not interfering in your department. Do

as you like. . . . No—in this case—let her stay on for the present."

"I can use her," said Tetlow. "And she gets only ten a week."

Norman frowned. He did not like to *hear* that an establishment in which he had control paid less than decent living wages—even if the market price did excuse—yes, compel it. "Send her in," he repeated. Then, as Tetlow was about to leave, "She is trustworthy?"

"All our force is. I see to that, Mr. Norman."

"Has she a young man—steady company, I think they call it?"

"She has no friends at all. She's extremely shy—at least, reserved. Lives with her father, an old crank of an analytical chemist over in Jersey City. She hasn't even a lady friend."

"Well, send her in."

A moment later Norman, looking up from his work, saw the dim slim nonentity before him. Again he leaned back and, as he talked with her, studied her face to make sure that his first judgment was correct. "Do you stay late every night?" asked he smilingly.

She colored a little, but enough to bring out the exquisite fineness of her white skin. "Oh, I don't mind," said she, and there was no embarrassment in her manner. "I've got to learn—and doing things over helps."

"Nothing equal to it," declared Norman. "You've been to school?"

"Only six weeks," confessed she. "I couldn't afford to stay longer."

"I mean the other sort of school—not the typewriting."

"Oh! Yes," said she. And once more he saw that extraordinary transformation. She became all in an instant delicately, deliciously lovely, with the moving, in a way pathetic loveliness of sweet children and sweet flowers. Her look was mystery; but not a mystery of guile. She evidently did not wish to have her past brought to view; but it was equally apparent that behind it lay hid nothing shameful, only the sad, perhaps the painful. Of all the periods of life youth is the best fitted to bear deep sorrows, for then the spirit has its full measure of elasticity. Yet a shadow upon youth is always more moving than the shadows of maturer years—those shadows that do not lie upon the surface but are heavy and corroding stains. When Norman saw this shadow upon her youth, so immature-looking, so helpless-looking, he felt the first impulse of genuine interest in her. Perhaps, had that shadow happened to fall when he was seeing her as the commonplace and colorless little struggler for bread, and seeming doomed speedily to be worsted in the struggle—perhaps, he would have felt no interest, but only the brief qualm of pity that we dare not encourage in ourselves, on a

journey so beset with hopeless pitiful things as is the journey through life.

But he had no impulse to question her. And with some surprise he noted that his reason for refraining was not the usual reason—unwillingness uselessly to add to one's own burdens by inviting the mournful confidences of another. No, he checked himself because in the manner of this frail and mouselike creature, dim though she once more was, there appeared a dignity, a reserve, that made intrusion curiously impossible. With an apologetic note in his voice—a kind and friendly voice—he said:

"Please have your typewriter brought in here. I want you to do some work for me—work that isn't to be spoken of—not even to Mr. Tetlow." He looked at her with grave penetrating eyes. "You will not speak of it?"

"No," replied she, and nothing more. But she accompanied the simple negative with a clear and honest sincerity of the eyes that set his mind completely at rest. He felt that this girl had never in her life told a real lie.

One of the office boys installed the typewriter, and presently Norman and the quiet nebulous girl at whom no one would trouble to look a second time were seated opposite each other with the broad table desk between, he leaning far back in his desk chair, fingers interlocked behind his proud, strong-looking head, she holding

sharpened pencil suspended over the stenographic note-book. Long before she seated herself he had forgotten her except as machine. There followed a troubled hour, as he dictated, ordered erasure, redictated, ordered re-readings, skipped back and forth, in the effort to frame the secret agreement in the fewest and simplest, and least startlingly unlawful, words. At last he leaned forward with the shine of triumph in his eyes.

"Read straight through," he commanded.

She read, interrupted occasionally by a sharp order from him to correct some mistake in her notes.

"Again," he commanded, when she translated the last of her notes.

This time she was not interrupted once. When she ended, he exclaimed: "Good! I don't see how you did it so well."

"Nor do I," said she.

"You say you are only a beginner."

"I couldn't have done it so well for anyone else," said she. "You are—different."

The remark was worded most flatteringly, but it did not sound so. He saw that she did not herself understand what she meant by "different." *He* understood, for he knew the difference between the confused and confusing ordinary minds and such an intelligence as his own—simple, luminous, enlightening all minds, however dark, so long as they were in the light-flooded region around it.

"Have I made the meaning clear?" he asked.

He hoped she would reply that he had not, though this would have indicated a partial defeat in the object he had—to put the complex thing so plainly that no one could fail to understand. But she answered, "Yes."

He congratulated himself that his overestimate of her ignorance of affairs had not lured him into giving her the names of the parties at interest to transcribe. But did she really understand? To test her, he said:

"What do you think of it?"

"That it's wicked," replied she, without hesitation and in her small, quiet voice.

He laughed. In a way this girl, sitting there—this inconsequential and negligible atom—typefied the masses of mankind against whom that secret agreement was directed. They, the feeble and powerless ones, with their necks ever bent under the yoke of the mighty and their feet ever stumbling into the traps of the crafty—they, too, would utter an impotent "Wicked!" if they knew. His voice had the note of gentle raillery in it as he said:

"No—not wicked. Just business."

She was looking down at her book, her face expressionless. A few moments before he would have said it was an empty face. Now it seemed to him sphynxlike.

"Just business," he repeated. "It is going to take money from those who don't know how to keep or to spend it and give it to those who do know how. The

money will go for building up civilization, instead o for beer and for bargain-trough finery to make work ing men's wives and daughters look cheap and nasty."

She was silent.

"Now, do you understand?"

"I understand what you said." She looked at hir as she spoke. He wondered how he could have fancie those lack-luster eyes beautiful or capable of expressior

"You don't believe it?" he asked.

"No," said she. And suddenly in those eyes, gaz ing now into space, there came the unutterably melan choly look—heavy-lidded from heartache, weary-wis from long, long and bitter, experiences. Yet she stil looked young—girlishly young—but it was the youth ful look the classic Greek sculptors tried to give thei young goddesses—the youth without beginning or end— younger than a baby's, older than the oldest of the son of men. He mocked himself for the fancies this quee creature inspired in him; but she none the less mad him uneasy.

"You don't believe it?" he repeated.

"No," she answered again. "My father has taugh me—some things."

He drummed impatiently on the table. He resente her impertinence—for, like all men of clear and positiv mind, he regarded contradiction as in one aspect im pudent, in another aspect evidence of the folly of hi contradictor. Then he gave a short laugh—the confess

ing laugh of the clever man who has tried to believe his own sophistries and has failed. "Well—neither do I believe it," said he. "Now, to get the thing typewritten."

She seated herself at the machine and set to work. As his mind was full of the agreement he could not concentrate on anything else. From time to time he glanced at her. Then he gave up trying to work and sat furtively observing her. What a quaint little mystery it was! There was in it—that is, in her—not the least charm for him. But, in all his experience with women, he could recall no woman with a comparable development of this curious quality of multiple personalities, showing and vanishing in swift succession.

There had been a time when woman had interested him as a puzzle to be worked out, a maze to be explored, a temple to be penetrated—until one reached the place where the priests manipulated the machinery for the wonders and miracles to fool the devotees into awe. Some men never get to this stage, never realize that their own passions, working upon the universal human love of the mysterious, are wholly responsible for the cult of woman the sphynx and the sibyl. But Norman, beloved of women, had been let by them into their ultimate secret—the simple humanness of woman; the clap-trappery of the oracles, miracles, and wonders. He had discovered that her "divine intuitions" were mere shrewd guesses, where they had any meaning at all;

that her eloquent silences were screens for ignorance or boredom—and so on through the list of legends that prop the feminist cult.

But this girl—this Miss Hallowell—here was a tangible mystery—a mystery of physics, of chemistry. He sat watching her—watching the changes as she bent to her work, or relaxed, or puzzled over the meaning of one of her own hesitating stenographic hieroglyphics —watched her as the waning light of the afternoon varied its intensity upon her skin. Why, her very hair partook of this magical quality and altered its tint, its degree of vitality even, in harmony with the other changes. . . . What was the explanation? By means of what rare mechanism did her nerve force ebb and flow from moment to moment, bringing about these fascinating surface changes in her body? Could anything, even any skin, be better made than that superb skin of hers —that master work of delicacy and strength, of smoothness and color? How had it been possible for him to fail to notice it, when he was always looking for signs of a good skin down town—and up town, too—in these days of the ravages of pastry and candy? . . . What long graceful fingers she had—yet what small hands! Certainly here was a peculiarity that persisted. No—absurd though it seemed, no! One way he looked at those hands, they were broad and strong, another way narrow and gracefully weak.

He said to himself: "The man who gets that girl

will have Solomon's wives rolled into one. A harem at the price of a wife—or a—" He left the thought unfinished. It seemed an insult to this helpless little creature, the more rather than the less cowardly for being unspoken; for, no doubt her ideas of propriety were firmly conventional.

"About done?" he asked impatiently.

She glanced up. "In a moment. I'm sorry to be so slow."

"You're not," he assured her truthfully. "It's my impatience. Let me see the pages you've finished."

With them he was able to concentrate his mind. When she laid the last page beside his arm he was absorbed, did not look at her, did not think of her. "Take the machine away," said he abruptly.

He was leaving for the day when he remembered her again. He sent for her. "I forgot to thank you. It was good work. You will do well. All you need is practice—and confidence. Especially confidence." He looked at her. She seemed frail—touchingly frail. "You are not strong?"

She smiled, and in an instant the frailty seemed to have been mere delicacy of build—the delicacy that goes with the strength of steel wires, or rather of the spider's weaving thread which sustains weights and shocks out of all proportion to its appearance. "I've never been ill in my life," said she. "Not a day."

Again, because she was standing before him in full

view, he noted the peculiar construction of her frame—the beautiful lines of length so dextrously combined that her figure as a whole was not tall. He said, "A working woman—or man—needs health above all. Thank you again." And he nodded a somewhat curt dismissal. When she glided away and he was alone behind the closed door, he reflected for a moment upon the extraordinary amount of thinking—and the extraordinary kind of thinking—into which this poor little typewriter girl had beguiled him. He soon found the explanation for this vagary into a realm so foreign to a man of his high tastes and ambitions. "It's because I'm so in love with Josephine," he decided. "I've fallen into the sentimental state of all lovers. The whole sex becomes novel and interesting and worth while."

As he left the office, unusually late, he saw her still at work—no doubt doing over again some bungled piece of copying. She had her normal and natural look and air—the atomic little typewriter, unattractive and uninteresting. With another smile for his romantic imaginings, he forgot her. But when he reached the street he remembered her again. The threatened blizzard had changed into a heavy rain. The swift and sudden currents of air, that have made of New York a cave of the winds since the coming of the skyscrapers, were darting round corners, turning umbrellas inside out, tossing women's skirts about their heads, reducing all who were abroad to the same level of drenched and sullen wretched-

ness. Norman's limousine was waiting at the curb. He, pausing in the doorway, glanced up and down the street, had an impulse to return and take the girl home. Then he smiled satirically at himself. Her lot condemned her to be out in all weathers. It would not be a kindness but an exhibition of smug vanity to shelter her this one night; also, there was the question of her reputation—and the possibility of turning her head, perhaps just enough to cause her ruin. He sprang across the wind-swept, rain-swept sidewalk and into the limousine whose door was being held open by an obsequious attendant. "Home," he said, and the door slammed.

Usually these journeys between office and home or club in the evening gave Norman a chance for ten or fifteen minutes of sleep. He had discovered that this brief dropping of the thread of consciousness gave him a wonderful fresh grip upon the day, enabled him to work or play until late into the night without fatigue. But that evening his mind was wide awake. Nor could he fix it upon business. It would interest itself only in the hurrying throngs of foot passengers and the ideas they suggested: Here am I—so ran his thoughts—here am I, tucked away comfortably while all those poor creatures have to plod along in the storm. I could afford to be sick. They can't. And what have I done to deserve this good fortune? Nothing. Worse than nothing. If I had made my career along the lines of

what is honest and right and beneficial to my fellow men, I'd probably be plugging home under an umbrella —and to a pretty poor excuse for a home. But I was too wise to do that. I've spent this day, as I spend all my days, in helping the powerful rich to add to their wealth and power, to add to the burdens those poor devils out there in the rain must bear. And I'm rewarded with a limousine, and all the rest of it.

These thoughts neither came from nor produced a mood of penitence, or of regret even. Norman was simply indulging in his favorite pastime—following without prejudice the leading of a chain of pure logic. He despised self-deceivers. He always kept himself free from prejudice and all its wiles. He took life as he found it; but he did not excuse it and himself with the familiar hypocrisies that make the comfortable classes preen themselves on being the guardians and saviours of the ignorant, incapable masses. When old Lockyer said one day that this was the function of the "upper classes," Norman retorted: "Perhaps. But, if so, how do they perform it? Like the brutal old-fashioned farm family that takes care of its insane member by keeping him chained in filth in the cellar." And once at the Federal Club— By the way, Norman had joined it, had compelled it to receive him just to show his associates how a strong man could break even such a firmly established tradition as that no one who amounted to anything could be elected to a fashionable club in New

York. Once at the Federal Club old Galloway quoted with approval some essayist's remark that every clever human being was looking after and holding above the waves at least fifteen of his weaker fellows. Norman smiled satirically round at the complacently nodding circle of gray heads and white heads. "My observation has been," said he, "that every clever chap is shrewd enough to compel at least fifteen of his fellows to wait on him, to take care of him—do his chores—and his dirty work." The nodding stopped. Scowls appeared, except on the face of old Galloway. He grinned. He was one of the few examples of a very rich man with a sense of humor. Norman always thought it was this slight incident that led to his getting the extremely profitable—and shady—Galloway business.

No, Norman's mood, as he watched the miserable crowds afoot and reflected upon them, was neither remorseful nor triumphant. He simply noted an interesting fact—a commonplace fact—of the methods of that sardonic practical joker, Life. Because the scheme of things was unjust and stupid, because others, most others, were uncomfortable or worse—why should he make himself uncomfortable? It would be an absurdity to get out of his limousine and trudge along in the wet and the wind. It would be equally absurd to sit in his limousine and be unhappy about the misery of the world. "I didn't create it, and I can't recreate it. And if I'm helping to make it worse, I'm also hastening

the time when it'll be better. The Great Ass must have brains and spirit kicked and cudgeled into it."

At his house in Madison Avenue, just at the crest of Murray Hill, there was an awning from front door to curb and a carpet beneath it. He passed, dry and comfortable, up the steps. A footman in quiet rich livery was waiting to receive him. From rising until bedtime, up town and down town, wherever he went and whatever he was about, every possible menial detail of his life was done for him. He had nothing to do but think about his own work and keep himself in health. Rarely did he have even to open or to close a door. He used a pen only in signing his name or marking a passage in a law book for some secretary to make a typewritten copy.

Upon most human beings this sort of luxury, carried beyond the ordinary and familiar uses of menial service, has a speedily enervating effect. Thinking being the most onerous of all, they have it done, also. They sink into silliness and moral and mental sloth. They pass the time at foolish purposeless games indoors and out; or they wander aimlessly about the earth chattering with similar mental decrepits, much like monkeys adrift in the boughs of a tropical forest. But Norman had the tenacity and strength to concentrate upon achievement all the powers emancipated by the use of menials wherever menials could be used. He employed to advantage the time saved in putting in shirt buttons

and lacing shoes and carrying books to and from shelves. In this lay one of the important secrets of his success. "Never do for yourself what you can get some one else to do for you as well. Save yourself for the things only *you* can do."

In his household there were three persons, and sixteen servants to wait upon them. His sister—she and her husband, Clayton Fitzhugh, were the other two persons—his sister was always complaining that there were not enough servants, and Frederick, the most indulgent of brothers, was always letting her add to the number. It seemed to him that the more help there was, the less smoothly the household ran. But that did not concern him; his mind was saved for more important matters. There was no reason why it should concern him; could he not compel the dollars to flood in faster than she could bail them out?

This brother and sister had come to New York fifteen years before, when he was twenty-two and she nineteen. They were from Albany, where their family had possessed some wealth and much social position for many generations. There was the usual "queer streak" in the Norman family—an intermittent but fixed habit of some one of them making a "low marriage." One view of this aberration might have been that there was in the Norman blood a tenacious instinct of sturdy and self-respecting independence that caused a Norman occasionally to do as he pleased instead of as he conven-

tionally ought. Each time the thing occurred there was a mighty and horrified hubbub throughout the connection. But in the broad, as the custom is, the Normans were complacent about the "queer streak." They thought it kept the family from rotting out and running to seed. "Nothing like an occasional infusion of common blood," Aunt Ursula Van Bruyten (born Norman) used to say. For her Norman's sister was named.

Norman's father had developed the "queer streak." Their mother was the daughter of a small farmer and, when she met their father, was chambermaid in a Troy hotel, Troy then being a largish village. As soon as she found herself married and in a position with whose duties she was unfamiliar, she set about fitting herself for them with the same diligence and thoroughness which she had shown in learning chamber work in a village hotel. She educated herself, selected not without shrewdness and carefully put on an assortment of genteel airs, finally contrived to make a most creditable appearance—was more aristocratic in tastes and in talk than the high mightiest of her relatives by marriage. But her son Fred was a Pinkey in character. In boyhood he was noted for his rough and low associates. His bosom friends were the son of a Jewish junk dealer, the son of a colored washwoman, and the son of an Irish day laborer. Also, the commonness persisted as he grew up. Instead of seeking aristocratic ease, he aspired to a career. He had

choice of several rich and well-born girls; but he developed a strong distaste for marriage of any sort and especially for a rich marriage. A fortune he was resolved to have, but it should be one that belonged to him. When he was about ready to enter a law office, his father and mother died leaving less than ten thousand dollars in all for his sister and himself. His sister hesitated, half inclined to marry a stupid second cousin who had thirty thousand a year.

"Don't do it, Ursula," Fred advised. "If you must sell out, sell for something worth while." He laughed in his frank, ironical way. "Fact is, we've both made up our minds to sell. Let's go to the best market—New York. If you don't like it, you can come back and marry that fat-wit any time you please."

Ursula inspected herself in the glass, saw a face and form exceeding fair to look upon; she decided to take her brother's advice. At twenty she threw over a multi-millionaire and married Clayton Fitzhugh for love—Clayton with only seventeen thousand a year. Of course, from the standpoint of fashionable ambition, seventeen thousand a year in New York is but one remove from tenement house poverty. As Clayton had no more ability at making money than had Ursula herself, there was nothing to do but live with Norman and "take care of him." But for this self-sacrifice of sisterly affection Norman would have been rich at thirty-seven. As he had to make her rich as well as himself,

progress toward luxurious independence was slower—and there was the house, costing nearly fifty thousand a year to keep up.

There had been a time in Norman's career—a brief and very early time—when, with the maternal peasant blood hot in his veins, he had entertained the quixotic idea of going into politics on the poor or people's side and fighting for glory only. The pressure of expensive living had soon driven this notion clean off. Norman had almost forgotten that he ever had it, was no longer aware how strong it had been in the last year at law school. Young men of high intelligence and ardent temperament always pass through this period. With some—a few—its glory lingers long after the fire has flickered out before the cool, steady breath of worldliness.

All this time Norman has been dressing for dinner. He now leaves the third floor and descends toward the library, as it still lacks twenty minutes of the dinner hour.

As he walked along the hall of the second floor a woman's voice called to him, "That you, Fred?"

He turned in at his sister's sitting room. She was standing at a table smoking a cigarette. Her tall, slim figure looked even taller and slimmer in the tight-fitting black satin evening dress. Her features faintly suggested her relationship to Norman. She was a handsome woman, with a voluptuous discontented mouth.

"What are you worried about, sis?" inquired he.

"How did you know I was worried?" returned she.

"You always are."

"Oh!"

"But you're unusually worried to-night."

"How did you know that?"

"You never smoke just before dinner unless your nerves are ragged. . . . What is it?"

"Money."

"Of course. No one in New York worries about anything else."

"But *this* is serious," protested she. "I've been thinking—about your marriage—and what'll become of Clayton and me?" She halted, red with embarrassment.

Norman lit a cigarette himself. "I ought to have explained," said he. "But I assumed you'd understand."

"Fred, you know Clayton can't make anything. And when you marry—why—what *will* become of us!"

"I've been taking care of Clayton's money—and of yours. I'll continue to do it. I think you'll find you're not so badly off. You see, my position enables me to compel a lot of the financiers to let me in on the ground floor—and to warn me in good time before the house falls. You'll not miss me, Ursula."

She showed her gratitude in her eyes, in a slight quiver of the lips, in an unsteadiness of tone as she said, "You're the real thing, Freddie."

"You can go right on as you are now. Only—" He was looking at her with meaning directness.

She moved uneasily, refused to meet his gaze. "Well?" she said, with a suggestion of defiance.

"It's all very natural to get tired of Clayton," said her brother. "I knew you would when you married him. But— Sis, I mind my own business. Still— Why make a fool of yourself?"

"You don't understand," she exclaimed passionately. And the light in her eyes, the color in her cheeks, restored to her for the moment the beauty of her youth that was almost gone.

"Understand what?" inquired he in a tone of gentle mockery.

"Love. You are all ambition—all self-control. You can be affectionate—God knows, you have been to me, Fred. But love you know nothing about—nothing."

His was the smile a man gives when in earnest and wishing to be thought jesting—or when in jest and wishing to be thought in earnest.

"You mean Josephine? Oh, yes, I suppose you do care for her in a way—in a nice, conventional way. She is a fine handsome piece—just the sort to fill the position of wife to a man like you. She's sweet and charming, she appreciates, she flatters you. I'm sure she loves you as much as a *girl* knows how to love. But it's all so conventional, so proper. Your position—her money. You two are of the regulation type even in

that you're suited to each other in height and figure. Everybody'll say, 'What a fine couple—so well matched!'"

"Maybe *you* don't understand," said Norman.

"If Josephine were poor and low-born—weren't one of us—and all that—would you have her?"

"I'm sure I don't know," was his prompt and amused answer. "I can only say that I know what I want, she being what she is."

Ursula shook her head. "I have only to see you and her together to know that you at least don't understand love."

"It might be well if *you* didn't," said Norman dryly. "You might be less unhappy—and Clayton less uneasy."

"Ah, but I can't help myself. Don't you see it in me, Fred? I'm not a fool. Yet see what a fool I act."

"Spoiled child—that's all. No self-control."

"You despise everyone who isn't as strong as you." She looked at him intently. "I wonder if you *are* as self-controlled as you imagine. Sometimes I wish you'd get a lesson. Then you'd be more sympathetic. But it isn't likely you will—not through a woman. Oh, they're such pitifully easy game for a man like you. But then men are the same way with you—quite as easy. You get anything you want. . . . You're really going to stick to Josephine?"

He nodded. "It's time for me to settle down."

"Yes—I think it is," she went on thoughtfully. "I can hardly believe you're to marry. Of course, she's the grand prize. Still—I never imagined you'd come in and surrender. I guess you *do* care for her."

"Why else should I marry?" argued he. "She's got nothing I need—except herself, Ursula."

"What *is* it you see in her?"

"What you see—what everyone sees," replied Fred, with quiet, convincing enthusiasm. "What no one could help seeing. As you say, she's the grand prize."

"Yes, she is sweet and handsome—and intelligent—very superior, without making others feel that they're outclassed. Still—there's something lacking—not in her perhaps, but in you. You have it for her—she's crazy about you. But she hasn't it for you."

"What?"

"I can't tell you. It isn't a thing that can be put into words."

"Then it doesn't exist."

"Oh, yes it does," cried Ursula. "If the engagement were to be broken—or if anything were to happen to her—why, you'd get over it—would go on as if nothing had happened. If she didn't fit in with your plans and ambitions, she'd be sacrificed so quick she'd not know what had taken off her head. But if you felt what I mean—then you'd give up everything—do the wildest, craziest things."

"What nonsense!" scoffed Norman. "I can im-

agine myself making a fool of myself about a woman as easily as about anything else. But I can't imagine myself playing the fool for anything whatsoever."

There was mysterious fire in Ursula's absent eyes. "You remember me as a girl—how mercenary I was—how near I came to marrying Cousin Jake?"

"*I* saved you from that."

"Yes—and for what? I fell in love."

"And out again."

"I was deceived in Clayton—deceived myself—naturally. How is a woman to know, without experience?"

"Oh, I'm not criticising," said the brother.

"Besides, a love marriage that fails is different from a mercenary marriage that fails."

"Very—very," agreed he. "Just the difference between an honorable and a dishonorable bankruptcy."

"Anyhow—it's bankrupt—my marriage. But I've learned what love is—that there is such a thing—and that it's valuable. Yes, Fred, I've got the taste for that wine—the habit of it. Could I go back to water or milk?"

"Spoiled baby—that's the whole story. If you had a nursery full of children—or did the heavy housework—you'd never think of these foolish moonshiny things."

"Yet you say you love!"

"Clayton is as good as any you're likely to run across—is better than *some* I've seen about."

"How can *you* say?" cried she. "It's for *me* to judge."

"If you would only *judge!*"

Ursula sighed. "It's useless to talk to you. Let's go down."

Norman, following her from the room, stopped her in the doorway to give her a brotherly hug and kiss. "You won't make an out-and-out idiot of yourself, will you, Ursula?" he said, in his winning manner.

The expression of her eyes as she looked at him showed how strong was his influence over her. "You know I'll come to you for advice before I do anything final," said she. "Oh, I don't know what I want! I only know what I don't want. I wish I were well balanced—as you are, Fred."

III

The brother and sister dined alone. Clayton was finding his club a more comfortable place than his home, in those days of his wife's disillusionment and hesitation about the future. Many weak creatures are curiously armed for the unequal conflict of existence—some with fleetness of foot, some with a pole-cat weapon of malignance, some with porcupine quills, some with a 'possumlike instinct for "playing dead." Of these last was Fitzhugh. He knew when to be silent, when to keep out of the way, when to "sit tight" and wait. His wife had discovered that he was a fool—that he perhaps owed more to his tailor than to any other single factor for the success of his splendid pose of the thorough gentleman. Yet she did not realize what an utter fool he was, so clever had he been in the use of the art of discreet silence. Norman suspected him, but could not believe a human being capable of such fathomless vacuity as he found whenever he tried to explore his brother-in-law's brain.

After dinner Norman took Ursula to the opera, to join the Seldins, and after the first act went to Josephine, who had come with only a deaf old aunt.

Josephine loved music, and to hear an opera from a box one must be alone. Norman entered as the lights went up. It always gave him a feeling of dilation, this spectacle of material splendor—the women, whose part it is throughout civilization to-day to wear for public admiration and envy the evidences of the prowess of the males to whom they belong. A truer version of Dr. Holmes's aphorism would be that it takes several generations in oil to make a deep-dyed snob—wholly to destroy a man's or a woman's point of view, sense of the kinship of all flesh, and to make him or her over into the genuine believer in caste and worshiper of it. For all his keenness of mind, of humor, Norman had the fast-dyed snobbishness of his family and friends. He knew that caste was silly, that such displays as this vulgar flaunting of jewels and costly dresses were in atrocious bad taste. But it is one thing to know, another thing to feel; and his feeling was delight in the spectacle, pride in his own high rank in the aristocracy.

His eyes rested with radiant pleasure on the girl he was to marry. And she was indeed a person to appeal to the passion of pride. Simply and most expensively dressed in pearl satin, with only a little jewelry, she sat in the front of her parterre box, a queen by right of her father's wealth, her family's position, her own beauty. She was a large woman—tall, a big frame but not ungainly. She had brilliant dark eyes, a small proud head set upon shoulders that were

slenderly young now and, even when they should became matronly, would still be beautiful. She had good teeth, an exquisite smile, the gentle good humor of those who, comfortable themselves, would not have the slightest objection to all others being equally so. Because she laughed appreciatively and repeated amusingly she had great reputation for wit. Because she industriously picked up from men a plausible smatter of small talk about politics, religion, art and the like, she was renowned as clever verging on profound. And she believed herself both witty and wise—as do thousands, male and female, with far less excuse.

She had selected Norman for the same reason that he had selected her; each recognized the other as the "grand prize." Pity is not nearly so close kin to love as is the feeling that the other person satisfies to the uttermost all one's pet vanities. It would have been next door to impossible for two people so well matched not to find themselves drawn to each other and filled with sympathy and the sense of comradeship, so far as there can be comradeship where two are driving luxuriously along the way of life, with not a serious cause for worry. People without half the general fitness of these two for each other have gone through to the end, regarding themselves and regarded as the most devoted of lovers. Indeed, they were lovers. Only one of those savage tests, to which in all probability they would never be exposed, would or could reveal just how much, or

how little, that vague, variable word lovers meant when applied to them.

As their eyes met, into each pair leaped the fine, exalted light of pride in possession. "This wonderful woman is mine!" his eyes said. And her eyes answered, "And you—you most wonderful of men—you are mine!" It always gave each of them a thrill like intoxication to meet, after a day's separation. All the joy of their dazzling good fortune burst upon them afresh.

"I'll venture you haven't thought of me the whole day," said she as he dropped to the chair behind her.

It was a remark she often made—to give him the opportunity to say, "I've thought of little else, I'm sorry to say—I, who have a career to look after." He made the usual answer, and they smiled happily at each other. "And you?" he said.

"Oh, I? What else has a woman to think about?"

Her statement was as true as his was false. He was indeed all she had to think about—all worth wasting the effort of thought upon. But he—though he did not realize it—had thought of her only in the incidental way in which an ambition-possessed man must force himself to think of a woman. The best of his mind was commandeered to his career. An amiable but shakily founded theory that it was "our" career enabled him to say without sense of lying that his chief thought had been she.

"How those men down town would poke fun at

you," said she, "if they knew you had me with you all the time, right beside you."

This amused him. "Still, I suspect there are lots of men who'd be exposed in the same way if there were a general and complete show-down."

"Sometimes I wish I really were with you—working with you—helping you. You have girls—a girl—to be your secretary—or whatever you call it—don't you?"

"You should have seen the one I had to-day. But there's always something pathetic about every girl who has to make her own living."

"Pathetic!" protested Miss Burroughs. "Not at all. I think it's fine."

"You wouldn't say that if you had tried it."

"Indeed, I should," she declared with spirit. "You men are entirely too soft about women. You don't realize how strong they are. And, of course, women don't resist the temptation to use their sex when they see how easy it is to fool men that way. The sad thing about it is that the woman who gets along by using her sex and by appealing to the soft-heartedness of men never learns to rely on herself. She's likely to come to grief sooner or later."

"There's truth in all that," said Norman. "Enough to make it dangerously unjust. There's so much lying done about getting on that it's no wonder those who've never tried to do for themselves get a wholly false notion

of the situation. It is hard—bitterly hard—for a man to get on. Most men don't. Most men? All but a mere handful. And if those who do get on were to tell the truth—the *whole* truth—about how they succeeded —well, it'd not make a pleasant story."

"But *you've* got on," retorted the girl.

"So I have. And how?" Norman smiled with humorous cynicism. "I'll never tell—not all—only the parts that sound well. And those parts are the least important. However, let's not talk about that. What I set out to say was that, while it's hard for a man to make a decent living—unless he has luck—and harder still—much harder—for him to rise to independence——"

"It wasn't so dreadfully hard for *you*," interrupted Josephine, looking at him with proud admiration. "But then, you had a wonderful brain."

"That wasn't what did it," replied he. "And, in spite of all my advantages—friendships, education, enough money to tide me over the beginnings—in spite of all that, I had a frightful time. Not the work. Of course, I had to work, but I like that. No, it was the—the maneuvering, let's call it—the hardening process."

"You!" she exclaimed.

"Everyone who succeeds—in active life. You don't understand the system, dear. It's a cutthroat game. It isn't at all what the successful hypocrites describe in their talks to young men!" He laughed. "If I

had followed the 'guides to success,' I'd not be here. Oh, yes, I've made terrible sacrifices, but—" his look at her made her thrill with exaltation—"it was worth doing. . . . I understand and sympathize with those who scorn to succeed. But I'm glad I happened not to be born with their temperament, at least not with enough of it to keep me down."

"You're too hard on yourself, too generous to the failures."

"Oh, I don't mean the men who were too lazy to do the work or too cowardly to dare the—the unpleasant things. And I'm not hard with myself—only frank. But we were talking of the women. Poor things, what chance have they got? You scorn them for using their sex. Wait till you're drowning, dear, before you criticise another for what he does to save himself when he's sinking for the last time. I used everything I had in making my fight. If I could have got on better or quicker by the aid of my sex, I'd have used that."

"Don't say those things, Fred," cried Josephine, smiling but half in earnest.

"Why not? Aren't you glad I'm here?"

She gave him a long look of passionate love and lowered her eyes.

"At whatever cost?"

"Yes," she said in a low voice. "But I'm *sure* you exaggerate."

"I've done nothing *you* wouldn't approve of—or

find excuses for. But that's because you—I—all of us in this class—and in most other classes—have been trained to false ideas—no, to perverted ideas—to a system of morality that's twisted to suit the demands of practical life. On Sundays we go to a magnificent church to hear an expensive preacher and choir, go in expensive dress and in carriages, and we never laugh at ourselves. Yet we are going in the name of One who was born in a stable and who said that we must give everything to the poor, and so on."

"But I don't see what we could do about it—" she said hesitatingly.

"We couldn't do anything. Only—don't you see my point?—the difference between theory and practice? Personally, I've no objection—no strong objection—to the practice. All I object to is the lying and faking about it, to make it seem to fit the theory. But we were talking of women—women who work."

"I've no doubt you're right," admitted she. "I suppose they aren't to blame for using their sex. I ought to be ashamed of myself, to sneer at them."

"As a matter of fact, their sex does few of them any good. The reverse. You see, an attractive woman —one who's attractive *as* a woman—can skirmish round and find some one to support her. But most of the working women—those who keep on at it—don't find the man. They're not attractive, not even at the start. After they've been at it a few years and lose the little

bloom they ever had—why, they've got to take their chances at the game, precisely like a man. Only, they're handicapped by always hoping that they'll be able to quit and become married women. I'd like to see how men would behave if they could find or could imagine any alternative to 'root hog or die.'"

"What's the matter with you this evening, Fred? I never saw you in such a bitter mood."

"We never happened to get on this subject before."

"Oh, yes, we have. And you always have scoffed at the men who fail."

"And I still scoff at them—most of them. A lot of lazy cowards. Or else, so bent on self-indulgence—petty self-indulgence—that they refuse to make the small sacrifice to-day for the sake of the large advantage day after to-morrow. Or else so stuffed with vanity that they never see their own mistakes. However, why blame them? They were born that way, and can't change. A man who has the equipment of success and succeeds has no more right to sneer at one less lucky than you would have to laugh at a poor girl because she wasn't dressed as well as you."

"What a mood! *Something* must have happened."

"Perhaps," said he reflectively. "Possibly that girl set me off."

"What girl?"

"The one I told you about. The unfortunate little creature who was typewriting for me this afternoon.

Not so very little, either. A curious figure she had. She was tall yet she wasn't. She seemed thin, and when you looked again, you saw that she was really only slender, and beautifully shaped throughout."

Miss Burroughs laughed. "She must have been attractive."

"Not in the least. Absolutely without charm—and so homely—no, not homely—commonplace. No, that's not right, either. She had a startling way of fading and blazing out. One moment she seemed a blank—pale, lifeless, colorless, a nobody. The next minute she became—amazingly different. Not the same thing every time, but different things."

Frederick Norman was too experienced a dealer with women deliberately to make the mistake—rather, to commit the breach of tact and courtesy—involved in praising one woman to another. But in this case it never occurred to him that he was talking to a woman of a woman. Josephine Burroughs was a lady; the other was a piece of office machinery—and a very trivial piece at that. But he saw and instantly understood the look in her eyes—the strained effort to keep the telltale upper lip from giving its prompt and irrepressible signal of inward agitation.

"I'm very much interested," said she.

"Yes, she was a curiosity," said he carelessly.

"Has she been there—long?" inquired Josephine, with a feigned indifference that did not deceive him.

"Several months, I believe. I never noticed her until a few days ago. And until to-day I had forgotten her. She's one of the kind it's difficult to remember."

He fell to glancing round the house, pretending to be unconscious of the furtive suspicion with which she was observing him. She said:

"She's your secretary now?"

"Merely a general office typewriter."

The curtain went up for the second act. Josephine fixed her attention on the stage—apparently undivided attention. But Norman felt rather than saw that she was still worrying about the "curiosity." He marveled at this outcropping of jealousy. It seemed ridiculous—it *was* ridiculous. He laughed to himself. If she could see the girl—the obscure, uninteresting cause of her agitation—how she would mock at herself! Then, too, there was the absurdity of thinking him capable of such a stoop. A woman of their own class—or a woman of its corresponding class, on the other side of the line—yes. No doubt she had heard things that made her uneasy, or, at least, ready to be uneasy. But this poorly dressed obscurity, with not a charm that could attract even a man of her own lowly class— It was such a good joke that he would have teased Josephine about it but for his knowledge of the world—a knowledge in whose primer it was taught that teasing is both bad taste and bad judgment. Also, it was beneath his dig-

nity, it was offense to his vanity, to couple his name with the name of one so beneath him that even the matter of sex did not make the coupling less intolerable.

When the curtain fell several people came into the box, and he went to make a few calls round the parterre. He returned after the second act. They were again alone — the deaf old aunt did not count. At once Josephine began upon the same subject. With studied indifference—how amusing for a woman of her inexperience to try to fool a man of his experience!—she said:

"Tell me some more about that typewriter girl. Women who work always interest me."

"She wouldn't," said Norman. The subject had been driven clean out of his mind, and he didn't wish to return to it. "Some day they will venture to make judicious long cuts in Wagner's operas, and then they'll be interesting. It always amuses me, this reverence of little people for the great ones—as if a great man were always great. No—he *is* always great. But often it's in a dull way. And the dull parts ought to be skipped."

"I don't like the opera this evening," said she. "What you said a while ago has set me to thinking. Is that girl a lady?"

"She works," laughed he.

"But she might have been a lady."

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Don't you know *anything* about her?"

"Except that she's trustworthy—and insignificant and not too good at her business."

"I shouldn't think you could afford to keep incompetent people," said the girl shrewdly.

"Perhaps they won't keep her," parried Norman gracefully. "The head clerk looks after those things."

"He probably likes her."

"No," said Norman, too indifferent to be cautious. "She has no 'gentlemen friends.'"

"How do you know that?" said the girl, and she could not keep a certain sharpness out of her voice.

"Tetlow, the head clerk, told me. I asked him a few questions about her. I had some confidential work to do and didn't want to trust her without being sure."

He saw that she was now prey to her jealous suspicion. He was uncertain whether to be amused or irritated. She had to pause long and with visible effort collect herself before venturing:

"Oh, she does confidential work for you? I thought you said she was incompetent."

He, the expert cross-examiner, had to admire her skill at that high science and art. "I felt sorry for her," he said. "She seemed such a forlorn little creature."

She laughed with a constrained attempt at raillery. "I never should have suspected you of such weakness. To give confidential things to a forlorn little incompetent, out of pity."

He was irritated, distinctly. The whole thing was preposterous. It reminded him of feats of his own before a jury. By clever questioning, Josephine had made about as trifling an incident as could be imagined take on really quite imposing proportions. There was annoyance in his smile as he said:

"Shall I send her up to see you? You might find it amusing, and maybe you could do something for her."

Josephine debated. "Yes," she finally said. "I wish you would send her—" with a little sarcasm—"if you can spare her for an hour or so."

"Don't make it longer than that," laughed he. "Everything will stop while she's gone."

It pleased him, in a way, this discovery that Josephine had such a common, commonplace weakness as jealousy. But it also took away something from his high esteem for her—an esteem born of the lover's idealizings; for, while he was not of the kind of men who are on their knees before women, he did have a deep respect for Josephine, incarnation of all the material things that dazzled him—a respect with something of the reverential in it, and something of awe—more than he would have admitted to himself. To-day, as of old, the image-makers are as sincere worshipers as visit the shrines. In our prostrations and genuflections in the temple we do not discriminate against the idols we ourselves have manufactured; on the contrary, them we worship with peculiar gusto. Norman knew his gods were frauds,

that their divine qualities were of the earth earthy. But he served them, and what most appealed to him in Josephine was that she incorporated about all their divine qualities.

He and his sister went home together. Her first remark in the auto was: "What were you and Josie quarreling about?"

"Quarreling?" inquired he in honest surprise.

"I looked at her through my glasses and saw that she was all upset—and you, too."

"This is too ridiculous," cried he.

"She looked—jealous."

"Nonsense! What an imagination you have!"

"I saw what I saw," Ursula maintained. "Well, I suppose she has heard something—something recent. I thought you had sworn off, Fred. But I might have known."

Norman was angry. He wondered at his own exasperation, out of all proportion to any apparent provoking cause. And it was most unusual for him to feel temper, all but unprecedented for him to show it, no matter how strong the temptation.

"It's a good idea, to make her jealous," pursued his sister. "Nothing like jealousy to stimulate interest."

"Josephine is not that sort of woman."

"You know better. All women are that sort. All men, too. Of course, some men and women grow angry

and go away when they get jealous while others stick closer. So one has to be judicious."

"Josephine and I understand each other far too well for such pettiness."

"Try her. No, you needn't. You have."

"Didn't I tell you——"

"Then what was she questioning you about?"

"Just to show you how wrong you were, I'll tell you. She was asking me about a poor little girl down at the office—one she wants to help."

Ursula laughed. "To help out of your office, I guess. I thought you'd lived long enough, Fred, to learn that no woman trusts *any* man about *any* woman. Who is this 'poor little girl'?"

"I don't even know her name. One of the typewriters."

"What made Josephine jealous of her?"

"Haven't I told you Josephine was not——"

"But I saw. Who is this girl?—pretty?"

Norman pretended to stifle a yawn. "Josephine bored me half to death talking about her. Now it's you. I never heard so much about so little."

"Is there something up between you and the girl?" teased Ursula.

"Now, that's an outrage!" cried Norman. "She's got nothing but her reputation, poor child. Do leave her that."

"Is she very young?"

"How should I know?"

"Youth is a charm in itself."

"What sort of rot is this!" exclaimed he. "Do you think I'd drop down to anything of that kind—in *any* circumstances? A little working girl—and in my own office?"

"Why do you heat so, Fred?" teased the sister. "Really, I don't wonder Josephine was torn up."

An auto almost ran into them—one of those innumerable hairbreadth escapes that make the streets of New York as exciting as a battle—and as dangerous. For a few minutes Ursula's mind was deflected. But a fatality seemed to pursue the subject of the pale obscurity whose very name he was uncertain whether he remembered aright.

Said Ursula, as they entered the house, "A girl working in the office with a man has a magnificent chance at him. It's lucky for the men that women don't know their business, but are amateurs and too stuck on themselves to set and bait their traps properly. Is that girl trying to get round you?"

"What possesses everybody to-night!" cried Norman. "I tell you the girl 's as uninteresting a specimen as you could find."

"Then why are *you* so interested in her?" teased the sister.

Norman shrugged his shoulders, laughed with his normal easy good humor and went to his own floor.

On top of the pile of letters beside his plate, next morning, lay a note from Josephine:

"Don't forget your promise about that girl, dear. I've an hour before lunch, and could see her then. I was out of humor last night. I'm very penitent this morning. Please forgive me. Maybe I can do something for her.

"JOSEPHINE."

Norman read with amused eyes. "Well!" soliloquized he, "I'm not likely to forget that poor little creature again. What a fuss about nothing!"

IV

Many men, possibly a majority, have sufficient equipment for at least a fair measure of success. Yet all but a few are downright failures, passing their lives in helpless dependence, glad to sell themselves for a small part of the value they create. For this there are two main reasons. The first is, as Norman said, that only a few men have the self-restraint to resist the temptings of a small pleasure to-day in order to gain a larger to-morrow or next day. The second is that few men possess the power of continuous concentration. Most of us cannot concentrate at all; any slight distraction suffices to disrupt and destroy the whole train of thought. A good many can concentrate for a few hours, for a week or so, for two or three months. But there comes a small achievement and it satisfies, or a small discouragement and it disheartens. Only to the rare few is given the power to concentrate steadily, year in and year out, through good and evil event or report.

As Norman stepped into his auto to go to the office —he had ridden a horse in the park before breakfast

until its hide was streaked with lather—the instant he entered his auto, he discharged his mind of everything but the business before him down town—or, rather, business filled his mind so completely that everything else poured out and away. A really fine mind—a perfect or approximately perfect instrument to the purposes of its possessor—is a marvelous spectacle of order. It is like a vast public library constantly used by large numbers. There are alcoves, rows on rows, shelves on shelves, with the exactest system everywhere prevailing, with the attendants moving about in hist-bottomed shoes, fulfilling without the least hesitation or mistake the multitude of directions from the central desk. It is like an admirably drilled army, where there is the nice balance of freedom and discipline that gives mobility without confusion; the divisions, down to files and even units, can be disposed along the line of battle wherever needed, or can be marshaled in reserve for use at the proper moment. Such a mind may be used for good purpose or bad—or for mixed purposes, after the usual fashion in human action. But whatever the service to which it is put, it acts with equal energy and precision. Character—that is a thing apart. The character determines the morality of action; but only the intellect determines the skill of action.

In the offices of that great law firm one of the keenest pleasures of the more intelligent of the staff was watching the workings of Frederick Norman's mind—

its ease of movement, its quickness and accuracy, its obedience to the code of mental habits he had fixed for himself. In large part all this was born with the man; but it had been brought to a state of perfection by the most painful labor, by the severest discipline, by years of practice of the sacrifice of small temptations—temptations to waste time and strength on the little pleasant things which result in such heavy bills—bills that bankrupt a man in middle life and send him in old age into the deserts of poverty and contempt.

Such an unique and trivial request as that of Josephine Burroughs being wholly out of his mental habit for down town, he forgot it along with everything else having to do with uptown only—along with Josephine herself, to tell a truth which may pique the woman reader and may be wholly misunderstood by the sentimentalists. By merest accident he was reminded.

As the door of his private office opened to admit an important client he happened to glance up. And between the edge of the door frame and his client's automobile-fattened and carefully dressed body, he caught a glimpse of the "poor little forlornness" who chanced to be crossing the outer office. A glint of sunlight on her hair changed it from lifelessness to golden vital vividness; the same chance sunbeam touched her pale skin with a soft yellow radiation—and her profile was delicately fine and regular. Thus Norman, who ob-

served everything, saw a head of finely wrought gold—a startling cameo against the dead white of office wall. It was only with the second thought that he recognized her. The episode of the night before came back—and Josephine's penitent yet persistent note.

He glanced at the clock. Said the client in the amusing tone of one who would like to take offense if he only dared, "I'll not detain you long, Mr. Norman. And really the matter is extremely important."

There are not many lawyers, even of the first rank, with whom their big clients reverse the attitude of servant and master. Norman might well have been flattered. In that restrained tone from one used to servility and fond of it and easily miffed by lack of it was the whole story of Norman's long battle and splendid victory. But he was not in the mood to be flattered; he was thinking of other things. And it presently annoyed him that his usually docile mind refused to obey his will's order to concentrate on the client and the business—said business being one of those huge schemes through which a big monster of a corporation is constructed by lawyers out of materials supplied by great capitalists and controllers of capital, is set to eating in enormous meals the substance of the people; at some obscure point in all the principal veins small but leechlike parasite corporations are attached, industriously to suck away the surplus blood so that the owners of the beast may say, "It is eating almost nothing. See how lean it is,

poor thing! Why, the bones fairly poke through its meager hide."

An interesting and highly complicated enterprise is such a construction. It was of the kind in which Norman's mind especially delighted; Hercules is himself only in presence of an herculean labor. But on that day he could not concentrate, and because of a trifle! He felt like a giant disabled by a grain of dust in the eye—yes, a mere grain of dust! "I must love Josephine even more than I realize, to be fretted by such a paltry thing," thought he. And after patiently enduring the client for half an hour without being able to grasp the outlines of the project, he rose abruptly and said: "I must get into my mind the points you've given me before we can go further. So I'll not waste your time."

This sounded very like "Clear out—you've bored me to my limit of endurance." But the motions of a mind such as he knew Norman had were beyond and high above the client's mere cunning at dollar-trapping. He felt that it was the part of wisdom—also soothing to vanity—to assume that Norman meant only what his words conveyed. When Norman was alone he rang for an office boy and said:

"Please ask Miss Halliday to come here."

The boy hesitated. "Miss Hallowell?" he suggested.

"Hallowell—thanks—Hallowell," said Norman.

And it somehow pleased him that he had not remembered her name. How significant it was of her insignificance that so accurate a memory as his should make the slip. When she, impassive, colorless, nebulous, stood before him the feeling of pleasure was, queerly enough, mingled with a sense of humiliation. What absurd vagaries his imagination had indulged in! For it must have been sheer hallucination, his seeing those wonders in her. How he would be laughed at if those pictures he had made of her could be seen by any other eyes! "They must be right when they say a man in love is touched in the head. Only, why the devil should I have happened to get these crazy notions about a person I've no interest in?" However, the main point —and most satisfactory—was that Josephine would be at a glance convinced—convicted—made ashamed of her absurd attack. A mere grain of dust.

"Just a moment, please," he said to Miss Hallowell. "I want to give you a note of introduction."

He wrote the note to Josephine Burroughs: "Here she is. I've told her you wish to talk with her about doing some work for you." When he finished he looked up. She was standing at the window, gazing out upon the tremendous panorama of skyscrapers that makes New York the most astounding of the cities of men. He was about to speak. The words fell back unuttered. For once more the hallucination—or whatever it was—laid hold of him. That figure by the window—that

beautiful girl, with the great dreamy eyes and the soft and languorous nuances of golden haze over her hair, over the skin of perfectly rounded cheek and perfectly moulded chin curving with ideal grace into the whitest and firmest of throats——

"Am I mad? or do I really see what I see?" he muttered.

He turned away to clear his eyes for a second view, for an attempt to settle it whether he saw or imagined. When he looked again, she was observing him—and once more she was the obscure, the cipherlike Miss Hallowell, ten-dollar-a-week typewriter and not worth it. Evidently she noted his confusion and was vaguely alarmed by it. He recovered himself as best he could and debated whether it was wise to send her to Josephine. Surely those transformations were not altogether his own hallucinations; and Josephine might see, might humiliate him by suspecting more strongly— . . . Ridiculous! He held out the letter.

"The lady to whom this is addressed wishes to see you. Will you go there, right away, please? It may be that you'll get the chance to make some extra money. You've no objection, I suppose?"

She took the letter hesitatingly.

"You will find her agreeable, I think," continued he. "At any rate, the trip can do no harm."

She hesitated a moment longer, as if weighing what he had said. "No, it will do no harm," she finally said.

Then, with a delightful color and a quick transformation into a vision of young shyness, "Thank you, Mr. Norman. Thank you so much."

"Not at all—not in the least," he stammered, the impulse strong to take the note back and ask her to return to her desk.

When the door closed behind her he rose and paced about the room uneasily. He was filled with disquiet, with hazy apprehension. His nerves were unsteady, as if he were going through an exhausting strain. He sat and tried to force himself to work. Impossible. "What sort of damn fool attack is this?" he exclaimed, pacing about again. He searched his mind in vain for any cause adequate to explain his unprecedented state. "If I did not know that I was well—absolutely well—I'd think I was about to have an illness—something in the brain."

He appealed to that friend in any trying hour, his sense of humor. He laughed at himself; but his nerves refused to return to the normal. He rushed from his private office on various pretexts, each time lingered in the general room, talking aimlessly with Tetlow—and watching the door. When she at last appeared, he guiltily withdrew, feeling that everyone was observing his perturbation and was wondering at it and jesting about it. "And what the devil am I excited about?" he demanded of himself. What indeed? He seated himself, rang the bell.

"If Miss Hallowell has got back," he said to the office boy, "please ask her to come in."

"I think she's gone out to lunch," said the boy. "I know she came in a while ago. She passed along as you was talking to Mr. Tetlow."

Norman felt himself flushing. "Any time will do," he said, bending over the papers spread out before him —the papers in the case of the General Traction Company resisting the payment of its taxes. A noisome odor seemed to be rising from the typewritten sheets. He made a wry face and flung the papers aside with a gesture of disgust. "They never do anything honest," he said to himself. "From the stock-jobbing owners down to the nickel-filching conductors they steal—steal —steal!" And then he wondered at, laughed at, his heat. What did it matter? An ant pilfering from another ant and a sparrow stealing the crumb found by another sparrow—a man robbing another man—all part of the universal scheme. Only a narrow-minded ignoramus would get himself wrought up over it; a philosopher would laugh—and take what he needed or happened to fancy.

The door opened. Miss Hallowell entered, a small and demure hat upon her masses of thick fair hair arranged by anything but unskillful fingers. "You wished to see me?" came in the quiet little voice, sweet and frank and shy.

He roused himself from pretended abstraction.

"Oh—it's you?" he said pleasantly. "They said you were out."

"I was going to lunch. But if you've anything for me to do, I'll be glad to stay."

"No—no. I simply wished to say that if Miss Burroughs wished to make an arrangement with you, we'd help you about carrying out your part of it."

She was pale—so pale that it brought out strongly the smooth dead-white purity of her skin. Her small features wore an expression of pride, of haughtiness even. And in the eyes that regarded him steadily there shone a cold light—the light of a proud and lonely soul that repels intrusion even as the Polar fastnesses push back without effort assault upon their solitudes. "We made no arrangement," said she.

"You are not more than eighteen, are you?" inquired he abruptly.

The irrelevant question startled her. She looked as if she thought she had not heard aright. "I am twenty," she said.

"You have a most—most unusual way of shifting to various ages and personalities," explained he, with some embarrassment.

She simply looked at him and waited.

His embarrassment increased. It was a novel sensation to him, this feeling ill at ease with a woman—he who was at ease with everyone and put others at their ease or not as he pleased. "I'm sorry you and Miss

Burroughs didn't arrange something. I suppose she found the hours difficult."

"She made me an offer," replied the girl. "I refused it."

"But, as I told you, we can let you off—anything within reason."

"Thank you, but I do not care to do that kind of work. No doubt any kind of work for wages classes one as a servant. But those people up there—they make one *feel* it—feel menial."

"Not Miss Burroughs, I assure you."

A satirical smile hovered round the girl's lips. Her face was altogether lovely now, and no lily ever rose more gracefully from its stem than did her small head from her slender form. "She meant to be kind, but she was insulting. Those people up there don't understand. They're vain and narrow. Oh, I don't blame them. Only, I don't care to be brought into contact with them."

He looked at her in wonder. She talked of Josephine as if she were Josephine's superior, and her expression and accent were such that they contrived to convey an impression that she had the right to do it. He grew suddenly angry at her, at himself for listening to her. "I am sorry," he said stiffly, and took up a pen to indicate that he wished her to go.

He rather expected that she would be alarmed. But if she was, she wholly concealed it. She smiled slightly

and moved toward the door. Looking after her, he relented. She seemed so young—was so young—and was evidently poor. He said:

"It's all right to be proud, Miss Hallowell. But there is such a thing as supersensitiveness. You are earning your living. If you'll pardon me for thrusting advice upon you, I think you've made a mistake. I'm sure Miss Burroughs meant well. If you had been less sensitive you'd soon have realized it."

"She patronized me," replied the girl, not angrily, but with amusement. "It was all I could do not to laugh in her face. The idea of a woman who probably couldn't make five dollars a week fancying she was the superior of any girl who makes her own living, no matter how poor a living it is."

Norman laughed. It had often appealed to his own sense of humor, the delusion that the tower one happened to be standing upon was part of one's own stature. But he said: "You're a very foolish young person. You'll not get far in the world if you keep to that road. It winds through Poverty Swamps to the Poor House."

"Oh, no," replied she. "One can always die."

Again he laughed. "But why die? Why not be sensible and live?"

"I don't know," replied she. She was looking away dreamily, and her eyes were wonderful to see. "There are many things I feel and do—and I don't at all understand why. But—" An expression of startling resolu-

tion flashed across her face. "But I do them, just the same."

A brief silence; then, as she again moved toward the door, he said, "You have been working for some time?"

"Four years."

"You support yourself?"

"I work to help out father's income. He makes almost enough, but not quite."

Almost enough! The phrase struck upon Norman's fancy as both amusing and sad. Almost enough for what? For keeping body and soul together; for keeping body barely decently clad. Yet she was content. He said:

"You like to work?"

"Not yet. But I think I shall when I learn this business. One feels secure when one has a trade."

"It doesn't impress me as an interesting life for a girl of your age," he suggested.

"Oh, I'm not unhappy. And at home, of evenings and Sundays, I'm happy."

"Doing what?"

"Reading and talking with father—and doing the housework—and all the rest of it."

What a monotonous narrow little life! He wanted to pity her, but somehow he could not. There was no suggestion in her manner that she was an object of pity. "What did Miss Burroughs say to you—if I may ask?"

"Certainly. You sent me, and I'm much obliged to you. I realize it was an opportunity—for another sort of girl. I half tried to accept because I knew refusing was only my—queerness." She smiled charmingly. "You are not offended because I couldn't make myself take it?"

"Not in the least." And all at once he felt that it was true. This girl would have been out of place in service. "What was the offer?"

Suddenly before him there appeared a clever, willful child, full of the childish passion for imitation and mockery. And she proceeded to "take off" the grand Miss Burroughs—enough like Josephine to give the satire point and barb. He could see Josephine resolved to be affable and equal, to make this doubtless bedazzled stray from the "lower classes" feel comfortable in those palatial surroundings. She imitated Josephine's walk, her way of looking, her voice for the menials—gracious and condescending. The exhibition was clever, free from malice, redolent of humor. Norman laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"You ought to go on the stage," said he. "How Josephine—Miss Burroughs would appreciate it! For she's got a keen sense of humor."

"Not for the real jokes—like herself," replied Miss Hallowell.

"You're prejudiced."

"No. I see her as she is. Probably everyone else

—those around her—see her money and her clothes and all that. But I saw—just her."

He nodded thoughtfully. Then he looked penetratingly at her. "How did you happen to learn to do that?" he asked. "To see people as they are?"

"Father taught me." Her eyes lighted up, her whole expression changed. She became beautiful with the beauty of an intense and adoring love. "Father is a wonderful man—one of the most wonderful that ever lived. He——"

There was a knock at the door. She startled; he looked confused. Both awakened to a sense of their forgotten surroundings, of who and what they were. She went and Mr. Sanders entered. But even in his confusion Norman marveled at the vanishing of the fascinating personality who had been captivating him into forgetting everything else, at the reappearance of the blank, the pale and insignificant personality attached to a typewriting machine at ten dollars a week. No, not insignificant, not blank—never again that, for him. He saw now the full reality—and also why he, everyone, was so misled. She made him think of the surface of the sea when the sky is gray and the air calm. It lies smooth and flat and expressionless—inert, monotonous. But let sunbeam strike or breeze ever so faint start up, and what a commotion of unending variety! He could never look at her again without being reminded of those infinite latent possibilities, without wondering what new

and perhaps more charming, more surprising varieties of look and tone and manner could be evoked.

And while Sanders was talking—prosing on and on about things Norman either already knew or did not wish to know—he was thinking of her. "If she happens to meet a man with enough discernment to fall in love with her," he said to himself, "he certainly will never weary. What a pity that such a girl shouldn't have had a chance, should be wasted on some unappreciative chucklehead of her class! What a pity she hasn't ambition—or the quality, whatever it is—that makes those who have it get on, whether they wish or no."

During the rest of the day he revolved from time to time indistinct ideas of somehow giving this girl a chance. He wished Josephine would and could help, or perhaps his sister Ursula. It was not a matter that could be settled, or even taken up, in haste. No man of his mentality and experience fails to learn how perilous it is in the least to interfere in the destiny of anyone. And his notion involved not slight interference with advice or suggestion or momentarily extended helping hand, but radical change of the whole current of destiny. Also, he appreciated how difficult it is for a man to do anything for a young woman—anything that would not harm more than it would help. Only one thing seemed clear to him—the "clever child" ought to have a chance.

He went to see Josephine after dinner that night.

His own house, while richly and showily furnished, as became his means and station, seemed—and indeed was—merely an example of simple, old-fashioned "solid comfort" in comparison with the Burroughs palace. He had never liked, but, being a true New Yorker, had greatly admired the splendor of that palace, its costly art junk, its rotten old tapestries, its unlovely genuine antiques, its room after room of tasteless magnificence, suggesting a museum, or rather the combination home and salesroom of an art dealer. This evening he found himself curious, critical, disposed to license a long-suppressed sense of humor. While he was waiting for Josephine to come down to the small salon into which he had been shown, her older sister drifted in, on the way to a late dinner and ball. She eyed him admiringly from head to foot.

"You've *such* an air, Fred," said she. "You should hear the butler on the subject of you. He says that of all the men who come to the house you are most the man of the world. He says he could tell it by the way you walk in and take off your hat and coat and throw them at him."

Norman laughed and said, "I didn't know. I must stop that."

"Don't!" cried Mrs. Bellowes. "You'll break his heart. He adores it. You know, servants dearly love to be treated as servants. Anyone who thinks the world loves equality knows very little about human nature.

Most people love to look up, just as most women love to be ruled. No, you must continue to be the master, the man of the world, Fred."

She was busy with her gorgeous and trailing wraps and with her cigarette or she would have seen his confusion. He was recalling his scene with the typewriter girl. Not much of the man of the world, then and there, certainly. What a grotesque performance for a man of his position, for a serious man of any kind! And how came he to permit such a person to mimic Josephine Burroughs, a lady, the woman to whom he was engaged? In these proud and pretentious surroundings he felt contemptibly guilty—and dazed wonder at his own inexplicable folly and weakness.

Mrs. Bellowes departed before Josephine came down. So there was no relief for his embarrassment. He saw that she too felt constrained. Instead of meeting him half way in embrace and kiss, as she usually did, she threw him a kiss and pretended to be busy lighting a cigarette and arranging the shades of the table lamp. "Well, I saw your 'poor little creature,'" she began. She was splendidly direct in all her dealings, after the manner of people who have never had to make their own way—to cajole or conciliate or dread the consequences of frankness.

"I told you you'd not find her interesting."

"Oh, she was a nice little girl," replied Josephine with elaborate graciousness—and Norman, the "take-

off" fresh in his mind, was acutely critical of her manner, of her mannerisms. "Of course," she went on, "one does not expect much of people of that class. But I thought her unusually well-mannered—and quite clean."

"Tetlow makes 'em clean up," said Norman, a gleam of sarcasm in his careless glance and tone. And into his nostrils stole an odor of freshness and health and youth, the pure, sweet odor that is the base of all the natural perfumes. It startled him, his vivid memory of a feature of her which he had not been until now aware that he had ever noted.

"I offered her some work," continued Josephine, "but I guess you keep her too busy down there for her to do anything else."

"Probably," said Norman. "Why do you sit on the other side of the room?"

"Oh, I don't know," laughed Josephine. "I feel queer to-night. And it seems to me you're queer, too."

"I? Perhaps rather tired, dear—that's all."

"Did you and Miss Hallowell work hard to-day?"

"Oh, bother Miss Hallowell. Let's talk about ourselves." And he drew her to the sofa at one end of the big fireplace. "I wish we hadn't set the wedding so far off." And suddenly he found himself wondering whether that remark had been prompted by eagerness—a lover's eagerness—or by impatience to have the business over and settled.

"You don't act a bit natural to-night, Fred. You touch me as if I were a stranger."

"I like that!" mocked he. "A stranger hold your hand like this?—and—kiss you—like this?"

She drew away, suddenly laid her hands on his shoulders, kissed him upon the lips passionately, then looked into his eyes. "*Do* you love me, Fred?—*really?*"

"Why so earnest?"

"You've had a great deal of experience?"

"More or less."

"Have you ever loved any woman as you love me?"

"I've never loved any woman but you. I never before wanted to marry a woman."

"But you may be doing it because—well, you might be tired and want to settle down."

"Do you believe that?"

"No, I don't. But I want to hear you say it isn't so."

"Well—it isn't so. Are you satisfied?"

"I'm frightfully jealous of you, Fred."

"What a waste of time!"

"I've got something to confess—something I'm ashamed of."

"Don't confess," cried he, laughing but showing that he meant it. "Just—don't be wicked again. That's much better than confession."

"But I must confess," insisted she. "I had evil

"'Would you like to think I was marrying you for what you have?—or for any other reason whatever but for what you are?'"

thoughts—evil suspicions about you. I've had them all day—until you came. As soon as I saw you I felt bowed into the dust. A man like you, doing anything so vulgar as I suspected you of—oh, dearest, I'm *so* ashamed!"

He put his arms round her and drew her to his shoulder. And the scene of mimicry in his office flashed into his mind, and the blood burned in his cheeks. But he had no such access of insanity as to entertain the idea of confession.

"It was that typewriter girl," continued Josephine. She drew away again and once more searched his face. "You told me she was homely."

"Not exactly that."

"Insignificant then."

"Isn't she?"

"Yes—in a way," said Josephine, the condescending note in her voice again—and in his mind Miss Hallowell's clever burlesque of that note. "But, in another way— Men are different from women. Now I—a woman of my sort—couldn't stoop to a man of her class. But men seem not to feel that way."

"No," said he, irritated. "They've the courage to take what they want wherever they find it. A man will take gold out of the dirt, because gold is always gold. But a woman waits until she can get it at a fashionable jeweler's, and makes sure it's made up in a fashionable way. I don't like to hear *you* say those things."

Her eyes flashed. "Then you *do* like that Hallowell girl!" she cried—and never before had her voice jarred upon him.

"That Hallowell girl has nothing to do with this," he rejoined. "I like to feel that you really love me—that you'd have taken me wherever you happened to find me—and that you'd stick to me no matter how far I might drop."

"I would! I would!" she cried, tears in her eyes. "Oh, I didn't mean that, Fred. You know I didn't—don't you?"

She tried to put her arms round his neck, but he took her hands and held them. "Would you like to think I was marrying you for what you have?—or for any other reason whatever but for what you are?"

It being once more a question of her own sex, the obstinate line appeared round her mouth. "But, Fred, I'd not be *me*, if I were—a working girl," she replied.

"You might be something even better if you were," retorted he coldly. "The only qualities I don't like about you are the surface qualities that have been plated on in these surroundings. And if I thought it was anything but just you that I was marrying, I'd lose no time about leaving you. I'd not let myself degrade myself."

"Fred—that tone—and don't—please don't look at me like that!" she begged.

But his powerful glance searched on. He said, "Is

it possible that you and I are deceiving ourselves—and that we'll marry and wake up—and be bored and dissatisfied—like so many of our friends?"

"No—no," she cried, wildly agitated. "Fred, dear—we love each other. You know we do. I don't use words as well as you do—and my mind works in a queer way— Perhaps I didn't mean what I said. No matter. If my love were put to the test—Fred, I don't ask anything more than that your love for me would stand the tests my love for you would stand."

He caught her in his arms and kissed her with more passion than he had ever felt for her before. "I believe you, Jo," he said. "I believe you."

"I love you so—that I could be jealous even of her—of that little girl in your office. Fred, I didn't confess all the truth. It isn't true that I thought her—a nobody. When she first came in here—it was in this very room—I thought she was as near nothing as any girl I'd ever seen. Then she began to change—as you said. And—oh, dearest, I can't help hating her! And when I tried to get her away from you, and she wouldn't come——"

"Away from me!" he cried, laughing.

"I felt as if it were like that," she pleaded. "And she wouldn't come—and treated me as if she were queen and I servant—only politely, I must say, for Heaven knows I don't want to injure her——"

"Shall I have her discharged?"

"Fred!" exclaimed she indignantly. "Do you think I could do such a thing?"

"She'd easily get another job as good. Tetlow can find her one. Does that satisfy you?"

"No," she confessed. "It makes me feel meaner than ever."

"Now, Jo, let's drop this foolish seriousness about nothing at all. Let's drop it for good."

"Nothing at all—that's exactly it. I can't understand, Fred. What is there about her that makes her haunt me? That makes me afraid she'll haunt you?"

Norman felt a sudden thrill. He tightened his hold upon her hands because his impulse had been to release them. "How absurd!" he said, rather noisily.

"Isn't it, though?" echoed she. "Think of you and me almost quarreling about such a trivial person." Her laugh died away. She shivered, cried, "Fred, I'm superstitious about her. I'm—I'm—*afraid!*" And she flung herself wildly into his arms.

"She *is* somewhat uncanny," said he, with a lightness he was far from feeling. "But, dear—it isn't complimentary to me, is it?"

"Forgive me, dearest — I don't mean that. I couldn't mean that. But—I *love* you so. Ever since I began to love you I've been looking round for something to be afraid of. And this is the first chance you've given me."

"*I've* given you!" mocked he.

She laughed hysterically. "I mean the first chance I've had. And I'm doing the best I can with it."

They were in good spirits now, and for the rest of the evening were as loverlike as always, the nearer together for the bit of rough sea they had weathered so nicely. Neither spoke of Miss Hallowell. Each had privately resolved never to speak of her to the other again. Josephine was already regretting the frankness that had led her to expose a not too attractive part of herself—and to exaggerate in his eyes the importance of a really insignificant chit of a typewriter. When he went to bed that night he was resolved to have Tetlow find Miss Hallowell a job in another office.

"She certainly *is* uncanny," he said to himself. "I wonder why—I wonder what the secret of her is. She's the first woman I ever ran across who had a real secret. *Is* it real? I wonder."

V

Toward noon the following day Norman, suddenly in need of a stenographer, sent out for Miss Purdy, one of the three experts at eighteen dollars a week who did most of the important and very confidential work for the heads of the firm. When his door opened again he saw not Miss Purdy but Miss Hallowell.

"Miss Purdy is sick to-day," said she. "Mr. Tetlow wishes to know if I would do."

Norman shifted uneasily in his chair. "Just as well—perfectly—certainly," he stammered. He was not looking at her—seemed wholly occupied with the business he was preparing to dispatch.

She seated herself in the usual place, at the opposite side of the broad table. With pencil poised she fixed her gaze upon the unmarred page of her open notebook. Instead of abating, his confusion increased. He could not think of the subject about which he wished to dictate. First, he noted how long her lashes were—and darker than her hair, as were her well-drawn eyebrows also. Never had he seen so white a skin or one so smooth. She happened to be wearing a blouse with a Dutch neck that day. What a superb throat! What

a line of beauty its gently swelling curve made. Then his glance fell upon her lips, rosy-red, slightly pouted. And what masses of dead gold hair—no, not gold, but of the white-gray of wood ashes, and tinted with gold! No wonder it was difficult to tell just what color her hair was. Hair like that was ready to be of any color. And there were her arms, so symmetrical in her rather tight sleeves, and emerging into view in the most delicate wrists. What a marvelous skin!

"Have you ever posed?"

She startled and the color flamed in her cheeks. Her eyes shot a glance of terror at him. "I—I," she stammered. Then almost defiantly, "Yes, I did—for a while. But I didn't suppose anyone knew. At the time we needed the money badly."

Norman felt deep disgust with himself for bursting out with such a question, and for having surprised her secret. "There's nothing to be ashamed of," he said gently.

"Oh, I'm not ashamed," she returned. Her agitation had subsided. "The only reason I quit was because the work was terribly hard and the pay small and uncertain. I was confused because they discharged me at the last place I had, when they found out I had been a model. It was a church paper office."

Again she poised her pencil and lowered her eyes. But he did not take the hint. "Is there anything you would rather do than this sort of work?" he asked.

"Nothing I could afford," replied she.

"If you had been kind to Miss Burroughs yesterday she would have helped you."

"I couldn't afford to do that," said the girl in her quiet, reticent way.

"To do what?"

"To be nice to anyone for what I could get out of it."

Norman smiled somewhat cynically. Probably the girl fancied she was truthful; but human beings rarely knew anything about their real selves. "What would you like to do?"

She did not answer his question until she had shrunk completely within herself and was again thickly veiled with the expression which made everyone think her insignificant. "Nothing I could afford to do," said she. It was plain that she did not wish to be questioned further along that line.

"The stage?" he persisted.

"I hadn't thought of it," was her answer.

"What then?"

"I don't think about things I can't have. I never made any definite plans."

"But isn't it a good idea always to look ahead? As long as one has to be moving, one might as well move in a definite direction."

She was waiting with pencil poised.

"There isn't much of a future at this business."

She shrank slightly. He felt that she regarded his remark as preparation for a kindly hint that she was not giving satisfaction. . . . Well, why not leave it that way? Perhaps she would quit of her own accord—would spare him the trouble—and embarrassment—of arranging with Tetlow for another place for her. He began to dictate—gave her a few sentences mockingly different from his usual terse and clear statements—interrupted himself with:

"You misunderstood me a while ago. I didn't mean you weren't doing your work well. On the contrary, I think you'll soon be expert. But I thought perhaps I might be able to help you to something you'd like better."

He listened to his own words in astonishment. What new freak of madness was this? Instead of clearing himself of this uncanny girl, he was proposing things to her that would mean closer relations. And what reason had he to think she was fitted for anything but just what she was now doing—doing indifferently well?

"Thank you," she said, so quietly that it seemed coldly, "but I'm satisfied as I am."

Her manner seemed to say with polite and restrained plainness that she was not in the least appreciative of his interest or of himself. But this could not be. No girl in her position could fail to be grateful for his interest. No woman, in all his life, had ever failed to respond to his slightest advance. No, it simply could not be. She

was merely shy, and had a peculiar way of showing it. He said:

"You have no ambition?"

"That's not for a woman."

She was making her replies as brief as civility permitted. He observed her narrowly. She was not shy, not embarrassed. What kind of game was this? It could not be in sincere nature for a person in her position thus to treat overtures, friendly and courteous overtures, from one in his position. And never before—never—had a woman been thus unresponsive. Instead of feeling relief that she had disentangled him from the plight into which his impulsive offer had flung him, he was piqued—angered—and his curiosity was inflamed as never before about any woman.

The relations of the sexes are for the most part governed by traditions of sex allurements and sex tricks so ancient that they have ceased to be conscious and have become instinctive. One of these venerable first principles is that mystery is the arch provoker. Norman, an old and expert student of the great game—the only game for which the staidest and most serious will abandon all else to follow its merry call—Norman knew this trick of mystery. The woman veils herself and makes believe to fly—an excellent trick, as good to-day as ever after five thousand years of service. And he knew that in it lay the explanation for the sudden and high upflaming of his interest in this girl. "What an

ass I'm making of myself!" reflected he. "When I care nothing about the girl, why should I care about the mystery of her? Of course, it's some poor little affair, a puzzle not worth puzzling out."

All true and clear enough. Yet seeing it did not abate his interest a particle. She had veiled herself; she was pretending—perhaps honestly—to fly. He rose and went to the window, stood with his back to her, resumed dictating. But the sentences would not come. He whirled abruptly. "I'm not ready to do the thing yet," he said. "I'll send for you later."

Without a word or a glance she stood, took her book and went toward the door. He gazed after her. He could not refrain from speaking again. "I'm afraid you misunderstood my offer a while ago," said he, neither curt nor friendly. "I forgot how such things from a man to a young woman might be misinterpreted."

"I never thought of that," replied she unembarrassed. "It was simply that I can't put myself under obligation to anyone."

As she stood there, her full beauty flashed upon him—the exquisite form, the subtly graceful poise of her body, of her head—the loveliness of that golden-hued white skin—the charm of her small rosy mouth—the delicate, sensitive, slightly tilted nose—and her eyes—above all, her eyes!—so clear, so sweet. Her voice had seemed thin and faint to him; its fineness now seemed

the rarest delicacy—the exactly fitting kind for so evasive and delicate a beauty as hers. He made a slight bow of dismissal, turned abruptly away. Never in all his life, strewn with gallant experiences—never had a woman thus treated him, and never had a woman thus affected him. "I am mad—stark mad!" he muttered. "A ten-dollar-a-week typewriter, whom nobody on earth but myself would look at a second time!" But something within him hurled back this scornful fling. Though no one else on earth saw or appreciated—what of it? She affected *him* thus—and that was enough. "*I* want her! . . . I *want* her! I have never wanted a woman before."

He rushed into the dressing room attached to his office, plunged his face into ice-cold water. This somewhat eased the burning sensation that was becoming intolerable. Many were the unaccountable incidents in his acquaintance with this strange creature; the most preposterous was this sudden seizure. He realized now that his feeling for her had been like the quiet, steady, imperceptible filling of a reservoir that suddenly announces itself by the thunder and roar of a mighty cascade over the dam. "This is madness—sheer madness! I am still master within myself. I will make short work of this rebellion." And with an air of calmness so convincing that he believed in it he addressed himself to the task of sanity and wisdom lying plain before him. "A man of my position caught by a girl

like that! A man such as I am, caught by *any* woman whatever!" It was grotesque. He opened his door to summon Tetlow.

The gate in the outside railing was directly opposite, and about thirty feet away. Tetlow and Miss Hallowell were going out—evidently to lunch together. She was looking up at the chief clerk with laughing eyes—they seemed coquettish to the infuriated Norman. And Tetlow—the serious and squab young ass was gazing at her with the expression men of the stupid squab sort put on when they wish to impress a woman. At this spectacle, at the vision of that slim young loveliness, that perfect form and deliciously smooth soft skin, white beyond belief beneath its faintly golden tint —the hot blood steamed up into Norman's brain, blinded his sight, reddened it with desire and jealousy. He drew back, closed his door with a bang.

"This is not I," he muttered. "What has happened? Am I insane?"

When Tetlow returned from lunch the office boy on duty at the gate told him that Mr. Norman wished to see him at once. Like all men trying to advance along ways where their fellow men can help or hinder, the head clerk was full of more or less clever little tricks thought out with a view to making a good impression. One of them was to stamp upon all minds his virtue of promptness—of what use to be prompt unless you forced every

one to feel how prompt you were? He went in to see Norman, with hat in hand and overcoat on his back and one glove off, the other still on. Norman was standing at a window, smoking a cigarette. His appearance—dress quite as much as manner—was the envy of his subordinate—as, indeed, it was of hundreds of the young men struggling to rise down town. It was so exactly what the appearance of a man of vigor and power and high position should be. Tetlow practiced it by the quarter hour before his glass at home—not without progress in the direction of a not unimpressive manner of his own.

As Tetlow stood at attention, Norman turned and advanced toward him. "Mr. Tetlow," he began, in his good-humored voice with the never wholly submerged under-note of sharpness, "is it your habit to go out to lunch with the young ladies employed here? If so, I wish to suggest—simply to suggest—that it may be bad for discipline."

Tetlow's jaw dropped a little. He looked at Norman, was astonished to discover beneath a thin veneer of calm signs of greater agitation than he had ever seen in him. "To-day was the first time, sir," he said. "And I can't quite account for my doing it. Miss Hallowell has been here several months. I never specially noticed her until the last few days—when the question of discharging her came up. You may remember it was settled by you."

Norman flung his cigarette away and stalked to the window.

"Mr. Norman," pursued Tetlow, "you and I have been together many years. I esteem it my greatest honor that I am able—that you permit me—to class you as my friend. So I'm going to give you a confidence—one that really startles me. I called on Miss Hallowell last night."

Norman's back stiffened.

"She is even more charming in her own home. And—" Tetlow blushed and trembled— "I am going to make her my wife if I can."

Norman turned, a mocking satirical smile unpleasantly sparkling in his eyes and curling his mouth. "Old man," he said, "I think you've gone crazy."

Tetlow made a helpless gesture. "I think so myself. I didn't intend to marry for ten years—and then —I had quite a different match in mind."

"What's the matter with you, Billy?" inquired Norman, inspecting him with smiling, cruelly unfriendly eyes.

"I'm damned if I know, Norman," said the head clerk, assuming that his friend was sympathetic and dropping into the informality of the old days when they were clerks together in a small firm. "I'd have proposed to her last night if I hadn't been afraid I'd lose her by being in such a hurry. . . . You're in love yourself."

Norman startled violently.

"You're going to get married. Probably you can sympathize. You know how it is to meet the woman you want and must have."

Norman turned away.

"I've had—or thought I had—rather advanced ideas on the subject of women. I've always had a horror of being married for a living or for a home or as an experiment or a springboard. My notion's been that I wouldn't trust a woman who wasn't independent. And theoretically I still think that's sound. But it doesn't work out in practice. A man has to have been in love to be able to speak the last word on the sex question."

Norman dropped heavily into his desk chair and rumpled his hair into disorder. He muttered something —the head clerk thought it was an oath.

"I'd marry her," Tetlow went on, "if I knew she was simply using me in the coldest, most calculating way. My only fear is that I shan't be able to get her —that she won't marry me."

Norman sneered. "That's not likely," he said.

"No, it isn't," admitted Tetlow. "They—the Hallowells—are nice people—of as good family as there is. But they're poor—very poor. There's only her father and herself. The old man is a scientist—spends most of his time at things that won't pay a cent—utterly impractical. A gentleman—an able man, if a

little cracked—at least he seemed so to me who don't know much about scientific matters. But getting poorer steadily. So I think she will accept me."

A gloomy, angry frown, like a black shadow, passed across Norman's face and disappeared. "You'd marry her—on those terms?" he sneered.

"Of course I *hope* for better terms——"

Norman sprang up, strode to the window and turned his back.

"But I'm prepared for the worst. The fact is, she treats me as if she didn't care a rap for the honor of my showing her attention."

"A trick, Billy. An old trick."

"Maybe so. But— I really believe she doesn't realize. She's queer—has been queerly brought up. Yes, I think she doesn't appreciate. Then, too, she's young and light—almost childish in some ways. . . . I don't blame you for being disgusted with me, Fred. But—damn it, what's a man to do?"

"Cure himself!" exploded Norman, wheeling violently on his friend. "You must act like a man. Billy, such a marriage is ruin for you. How can we take you into partnership next year? When you marry, you must marry in the class you're moving toward, not in any of those you're leaving behind."

"Do you suppose I haven't thought of all that?" rejoined Tetlow bitterly. "But I can't help myself. It's useless for me to say I'll try. I shan't try."

"Don't you want to get over this?" demanded Norman fiercely.

"Of course— No—I don't. Fred, you'd think better of me if you knew her. You've never especially noticed her. She's beautiful."

Norman dropped to his chair again.

"Really—beautiful," protested Tetlow, assuming that the gesture was one of disgusted denial. "Take a good look at her, Norman, before you condemn her. I never was so astonished as when I discovered how good-looking she is. I don't quite know how it is, but I suppose nobody ever happened to see how—how lovely she is until I just chanced to see it." At a rudely abrupt gesture from Norman he hurried on, eagerly apologetic, "And if you talk with her— She's very reserved. But she's the lady through and through—and has a good mind. . . . At least, I think she has. I'll admit a man in love is a poor judge of a woman's mind. But, anyhow, I *know* she's lovely to look at. You'll see it yourself, now that I've called your attention to it. You can't fail to see it."

Norman threw himself back in his chair and clasped his hands behind his head. "*Why* do you want to marry her?" he inquired, in a tone his sensitive ear approved as judicial.

"How can I tell?" replied the head clerk irritably. "Does a man ever know?"

"Always—when he's sensibly in love."

"But when he's just in love? That's what ails me," retorted Tetlow, with a sheepish look and laugh.

"Billy, you've got to get over this. I can't let you make a fool of yourself."

Tetlow's fat, smooth, pasty face of the overfed, underexercised professional man became a curious exhibit of alarm and obstinacy.

"You've got to promise me you'll keep away from her—except at the office—for—say, a week. Then—we'll see."

Tetlow debated.

"It's highly improbable that anyone else will discover these irresistible charms. There's no one else hanging round?"

"No one, as I told you the other day, when you questioned me about her."

Norman shifted, looked embarrassed.

"I hope I didn't give you the impression I was ashamed of loving her or would ever be ashamed of her anywhere?" continued Tetlow, a very loverlike light in his usually unromantic eyes. "If I did, it wasn't what I meant—far from it. You'll see, when I marry her, Norman. You'll be congratulating me."

Norman sprang up again. "This is plain lunacy, Tetlow. I am amazed at you—amazed!"

"Get acquainted with her, Mr. Norman," pleaded the subordinate. "Do it, to oblige me. Don't condemn us——"

"I wish to hear nothing more!" cried Norman violently. "Another thing. You must find her a place in some other office—at once."

"You're right, sir," assented Tetlow. "I can readily do that."

Norman scowled at him, made an imperious gesture of dismissal. Tetlow, chopfallen but obdurate, got himself speedily out of sight.

Norman, with hands deep in his pockets, stared out among the skyscrapers and gave way to a fit of remorse. It was foreign to his nature to do petty underhanded tricks. Grand strategy—yes. At that he was an adept, and not the shiftiest, craftiest schemes he had ever devised had given him a moment's uneasiness. But to be driving a ten-dollar-a-week typewriter out of her job—to be maneuvering to deprive her of a for her brilliant marriage—to be lying to an old and loyal retainer who had helped Norman full as much and as often as Norman had helped him—these sneaking bits of skullduggery made him feel that he had sunk indeed. But he ground his teeth together and his eyes gleamed wickedly. "He shan't have her, damn him!" he muttered. "She's not for him."

He summoned Tetlow, who was obviously low in mind as the result of revolving the things that had been said to him. "Billy," he began in a tone so amiable that he was ashamed for himself, "you'll not forget I have your promise?"

"What did I promise?" cried Tetlow, his voice shrill with alarm.

"Not to see her, except at the office, for a week."

"But I've promised her father I'd call this evening. He's going to show me some experiments."

"You can easily make an excuse—business."

"But I don't want to," protested the head clerk. "What's the use? I've got my mind made up. Norman, I'd hang on after her if you fired me out of this office for it. And I can't rest—I'm fit for nothing—until this matter's settled. I came very near taking her aside and proposing to her, just after I went out of here a while ago."

"You *damn* fool!" cried Norman, losing all control of himself. "Take the afternoon express for Albany instead of Harcott and attend to those registrations and arrange for those hearings. I'll do my best to save you. I'll bring the girl in here and keep her at work until you get out of the way."

Tetlow glanced at his friend; then the tears came into his eyes. "You're a hell of a friend!" he ejaculated. "And I thought you'd sympathize because you were in love."

"I do sympathize, Billy," Norman replied with an abrupt change to shamefaced apology. "I sympathize more than you know. I feel like a dog, doing this. But it can't result in any harm, and I want you to get a little fresh air in that hot brain of yours before you

commit yourself. Be reasonable, old man. Suppose you rushed ahead and proposed—and she accepted—and then, after a few days, you came to. What about her? You must act on the level, Tetlow. Do the fair thing by yourself and by her."

Norman had often had occasion to feel proud of the ingenuity and resourcefulness of his brain. He had never been quite so proud as he was when he finished that speech. It pacified Tetlow; it lightened his own sense of guilt; it gave him a respite.

Tetlow rewarded Norman with the look that in New York is the equivalent of the handclasp friend seeks from friend in times of stress. "You're right, Fred. I'm much obliged to you. I haven't been considering *her* side of it enough. A man ought always to think of that. The women—poor things—have a hard enough time to get on, at best."

Norman's smile was characteristically cynical. Sentimentality amused him. "I doubt if there are more female wrecks than male wrecks scattered about the earth," rejoined he. "And I suspect the fact isn't due to the gentleness of man with woman, either. Don't fret for the ladies, Tetlow. They know how to take care of themselves. They know how to milk with a sure and a steady hand. You may find it out by depressing experience some day."

Tetlow saw the aim. His obstinate, wretched expression came back. "I don't care. I've got——"

"You went over that ground," interrupted Norman impatiently. "You'd better be catching the train."

As Tetlow withdrew, he rang for an office boy and sent him to summon Miss Hallowell.

Norman had been reasoning with himself—with the aid of the self that was both better and more worldly wise. He felt that his wrestlings had not been wholly futile. He believed he had got the strength to face the girl with a respectful mind, with a mind resolute in duty—if not love—toward Josephine Burroughs. "I *love* Josephine," he said to himself. "My feeling for this girl is some sort of physical attraction. I certainly shall be able to control it enough to keep it within myself. And soon it will die out. No doubt I've felt much the same thing as strongly before. But it didn't take hold because I was never bound before—never had the sense of the necessity for restraint. That sense is always highly dangerous for my sort of man."

This sounded well. He eyed the entering girl coldly, said in a voice that struck him as excellent indifference, "Bring your machine in here, Miss Hallowell, and recopy these papers. I've made some changes. If you spoil any sheets, don't throw them away, but return everything to me."

"I'm always careful about the waste-paper baskets," said she, "since they warned me that there are men who make a living searching the waste thrown out of offices."

He made no reply. He could not have spoken if he had tried. Once more the spell had seized him—the spell of her weird fascination for him. As she sat typewriting, with her back almost toward him, he sat watching her and analyzing his own folly. He knew that diagnosing a disease does not cure it; but he found an acute pleasure in lingering upon all the details of the effect she had upon his nerves. He did not dare move from his desk, from the position that put a huge table and a revolving case of reference books between them. He believed that if he went nearer he would be unable to resist seizing her in his arms and pouring out the passion that was playing along his nerves as the delicate, intense flame flits back and forth along the surface of burning alcohol.

A knock at the door. He plunged into his papers. "Come!" he called.

Tetlow thrust in his head. Miss Hallowell did not look up. "I'm off," the head clerk said. His gaze was upon the unconscious girl—a gaze that filled Norman with longing to strangle him.

"Telegraph me from Albany as soon as you get there," said Norman. "Telegraph me at my club."

Tetlow was gone. The machine tapped monotonously on. The barette which held the girl's hair at the back was so high that the full beauty of the nape of her neck was revealed. That wonderful white skin with the golden tint! How soft—yet how firm—her

flesh looked! How slender yet how strong was her build——

"How do you like Tetlow?" he asked, because speak to her he must.

She glanced up, turned in her chair. He quivered before the gaze from those enchanting eyes of hers. "I beg pardon," she said. "I didn't hear."

"Tetlow—how do you like him?"

"He is very kind to me—to everyone."

"How did your father like him?"

He confidently expected some sign of confusion, but there was no sign. "Father was delighted with him," she said merrily. "He took an interest in the work father's doing—and that was enough."

She was about to turn back to her task. He hastened to ask another question. "Couldn't I meet your father some time? What Tetlow told me interested me greatly."

"Father would be awfully pleased," replied she. "But—unless you really care about—biology, I don't think you'd like coming."

"I'm interested in everything interesting," replied Norman dizzily. What was he saying? What was he doing? What folly was his madness plunging him into?

"You can come with Mr. Tetlow when he gets back."

"I'd prefer to talk with him alone," said Norman. "Perhaps I might see some way to be of service to him."

Her expression was vividly different from what it had been when he offered to help *her*. She became radiant with happiness. "I do hope you'll come," she said —her voice very low and sweet, in the effort she was making to restrain yet express her feelings.

"When? This evening?"

"He's always at home."

"You'll be there?"

"I'm always there, too. We have no friends. It's not easy to make acquaintances in the East—congenial acquaintances."

"I'd want you to be there," he explained with great care, "because you could help him and me in getting acquainted."

"Oh, he'll talk freely—to anyone. He talks only the one subject. He never thinks of anything else."

She was resting her crossed arms on the back of her chair and, with her chin upon them, was looking at him —a childlike pose and a childlike expression. He said: "You are *sure* you are twenty?"

She smiled gayly. "Nearly twenty-one."

"Old enough to be in love."

She lifted her head and laughed. She had charming white teeth—small and sharp and with enough irregularity to carry out her general suggestion of variability. "Yes, I shall like that, when it comes," she said. "But the chances are against it just now."

"There's Tetlow."

She was much amused. "Oh, he's far too old and serious."

Norman felt depressed. "Why, he's only thirty-five."

"But I'm not twenty-one," she reminded him. "I'd want some one of my own age. I'm tired of being so solemn. If I had love, I'd expect it to change all that."

Evidently a forlorn and foolish person—and doubtless thinking of him, two years the senior of Tetlow and far more serious, as an elderly person, in the same class with her father. "But you like biology?" he said. The way to a cure was to make her talk on.

"I don't know anything about it," said she, looking as frivolous as a butterfly or a breeze-bobbed blossom. "I listen to father, but it's all beyond me."

Yes—a light-weight. They could have nothing in common. She was a mere surface—a thrillingly beautiful surface, but not a full-fledged woman. So little did conversation with him interest her, she had taken advantage of the short pause to resume her work. No, she had not the faintest interest in him. It wasn't a trick of coquetry; it was genuine. He whom women had always bowed before was unable to arouse in her a spark of interest. She cared neither for what he had nor for what he was, in himself. This offended and wounded him. He struggled sulkily with his papers for half an hour. Then he fell to watching her again and——

"You must not neglect to give me your address,"

he said. "Write it on a slip of paper after you finish. I might forget it."

"Very well," she replied, but did not turn round.

"Why, do you think, did Tetlow come to see you?" he asked. He felt cheapened in his own eyes—he, the great man, the arrived man, the fiancé of Josephine Burroughs, engaged in this halting and sneaking flirtation! But he could not restrain himself.

She turned to answer. "Mr. Tetlow works very hard and has few friends. He had heard of my father and wanted to meet him—just like you."

"Naturally," murmured Norman, in confusion. "I thought—perhaps—he was interested in *you*."

She laughed outright—and he had an entrancing view of the clean rosy interior of her mouth. "In *me*? —Mr. Tetlow? Why, he's too serious and important for a girl like me."

"Then he bored you?"

"Oh, no. I like him. He is a good man—thoroughly good."

This pleased Norman immensely. It may be fine to be good, but to be called good—that is somehow a different matter. It removes a man at once from the jealousy-provoking class. "Good exactly describes him," said Norman. "He wouldn't harm a fly. In love he'd be ridiculous."

"Not with a woman of his own age and kind," protested she. "But I'm neglecting my work."

And she returned to it with a resolute manner that made him ashamed to interrupt again—especially after the unconscious savage rebukes she had administered. He sat there fighting against the impulse to watch her —denouncing himself—appealing to pride, to shame, to prudence—to his love for Josephine—to the sense of decency that restrains a hunter from aiming at a harmless tame song bird. But all in vain. He concentrated upon her at last, stared miserably at her, filled with longing and dread and shame—and longing, and yet more longing.

When she finished and stood at the other side of the desk, waiting for him to pass upon her work, she must have thought he was in a profound abstraction. He did not speak, made a slight motion with his hand to indicate that she was to go. Shut in alone, he buried his face in his arms. "What madness!" he groaned. "If I loved her, there'd be some excuse for me. But I don't. I couldn't. Yet I seem ready to ruin everything, merely to gratify a selfish whim—an insane whim."

On top of the papers she had left he saw a separate slip. He drew it toward him, spread it out before him. Her address. An unknown street in Jersey City!

"I'll not go," he said aloud, pushing the slip away. Go? Certainly not. He had never really meant to go. He would, of course, keep his engagement with Josephine. "And I'll not come down town until she has taken

another job and has caught Tetlow. I'll stop this idiocy of trying to make an impression on a person not worth impressing. What weak vanity—to be piqued by this girl's lack of interest!"

Nevertheless—he at six o'clock telephoned to the Burroughs' house that he was detained down town. He sent away his motor, dined alone in the station restaurant in Jersey City. And at half past seven he set out in a cab in search of—what? He did not dare answer that interrogation.

VI

Like many another chance explorer from New York, Norman was surprised to discover that, within a few minutes of leaving the railway station, his cab was moving through a not unattractive city. He expected to find the Hallowells in a tenement in some more or less squalid street overhung with railway smoke and bedaubed with railway grime. He was delighted when the driver assured him that there was no mistake, that the comfortable little cottage across the width of the sidewalk and a small front yard was the sought-for destination.

"Wait, please," he said to the cabman. "Or, if you like, you can go to that corner saloon down there. I'll know where to find you." And he gave him half a dollar.

The cabman hesitated between two theories of this conduct—whether it was the generosity it seemed or was a ruse to "side step" payment. He—or his thirst—decided for the decency of human nature; he drove confidingly away. Norman went up the tiny stoop and rang. The sound of a piano, in the room on the ground floor where there was light, abruptly ceased. The door

opened and Miss Hallowell stood before him. She was throughout a different person from the girl of the office. She had changed to a tight-fitting pale-blue linen dress made all in one piece. Norman could now have not an instant's doubt about the genuineness, the bewitching actuality, of her beauty. The wonder was how she could contrive to conceal so much of it for the purposes of business. It was a peculiar kind of beauty—not the radiant kind, but that which shines with a soft glow and gives him who sees it the delightful sense of being its original and sole discoverer. An artistic eye—or an eye that discriminates in and responds to feminine loveliness—would have been captivated, as it searched in vain for flaw.

If Norman anticipated that she would be nervous before the task of receiving in her humbleness so distinguished a visitor, he must have been straightway disappointed. Whether from a natural lack of that sense of social differences which is developed to the most pitiful snobbishness in New York or from her youth and inexperience, she received him as if he had been one of the neighbors dropping in after supper. And it was Norman who was ill at ease. Nothing is more disconcerting to a man accustomed to be received with due respect to his importance than to find himself put upon the common human level and compelled to "make good" all over again from the beginning. He felt—he knew—that he was an humble candidate for her

favor—a candidate with the chances perhaps against him.

The tiny parlor had little in it beside the upright piano because there was no space. But the paper, the carpet and curtains, the few pieces of furniture, showed no evidence of bad taste, of painful failure at the effort to "make a front." He was in the home of poor people, but they were obviously people who made a highly satisfactory best of their poverty. And in the midst of it all the girl shone like the one evening star in the mystic opalescence of twilight.

"We weren't sure you were coming," said she. "I'll call father. . . . No, I'll take you back to his workshop. He's easier to get acquainted with there."

"Won't you play something for me first? Or—perhaps you sing?"

"A very little," she admitted. "Not worth hearing."

"I'm sure I'd like it. I want to get used to my surroundings before I tackle the—the biology."

Without either hesitation or shyness, she seated herself at the piano. "I'll sing the song I've just learned." And she began. Norman moved to the chair that gave him a view of her in profile. For the next five minutes he was witness to one of those rare, altogether charming visions that linger in the memory in freshness and fragrance until memory itself fades away. She sat very straight at the piano, and the position brought

out all the long lines of her figure—the long, round white neck and throat, the long back and bosom, the long arms and legs—a series of lovely curves. It has been scientifically demonstrated that pale blue is preeminently the sex color. It certainly was preëminently *her* color, setting off each and every one of her charms and suggesting the roundness and softness and whiteness her drapery concealed. She was one of those rare beings whose every pose is instinct with grace. And her voice— It was small, rather high, at times almost shrill. But in every note of its register there sounded a mysterious, melancholy-sweet call to the responding nerves of man.

Before she got halfway through the song Norman was fighting against the same mad impulse that had all but overwhelmed him as he watched her in the afternoon. And when her last note rose, swelled, slowly faded into silence, it seemed to him that had she kept on for one note more he would have disclosed to her amazed eyes the insanity raging within him.

She turned on the piano stool, her hands dropped listlessly in her lap. "Aren't those words beautiful?" she said in a dreamy voice. She was not looking at him. Evidently she was hardly aware of his presence.

He had not heard a word. He was in no mood for mere words. "I've never liked anything so well," he said. And he lowered his eyes that she might not see what they must be revealing.

She rose. He made a gesture of protest. "Won't you sing another?" he asked.

"Not after that," she said. "It's the best I know. It has put me out of the mood for the ordinary songs."

"You are a dreamer—aren't you?"

"That's my real life," replied she. "I go through the other part just to get to the dreams."

"What do you dream?"

She laughed carelessly. "Oh, you'd not be interested. It would seem foolish to you."

"You're mistaken there," cried he. "The only thing that ever has interested me in life is dreams—and making them come true."

"But not *my* kind of dreams. The only kind I like are the ones that couldn't possibly come true."

"There isn't any dream that can't be made to come true."

She looked at him eagerly. "You think so?"

"The wildest ones are often the easiest." He had a moving voice himself, and it had been known to affect listening ears hypnotically when he was deeply in earnest, was possessed by one of those desires that conquer men of will and then make them irresistible instruments. "What is your dream?—happiness? . . . love?"

She gazed past him with swimming eyes, with a glance that seemed like a brave bright bird exploring infinity. "Yes," she said under her breath. "But it could never—never come true. It's too perfect."

"Don't doubt," he said, in a tone that fitted her mood as the rhythm of the cradle fits the gentle breathing of the sleeping child. "Don't ever doubt. And the dream will come true."

"You have been in love?" she said, under the spell of his look and tone.

He nodded slowly. "I am," he replied, and he was under the spell of her beauty.

"Is it—wonderful?"

"Like nothing else on earth. Everything else seems—poor and cheap—beside it."

He drew a step nearer. "But you couldn't love—not yet," he said. "You haven't had the experience. You will have to learn."

"You don't know me," she cried. "I have been teaching myself ever since I was a little girl. I've thought of nothing else most of the time. Oh—" she clasped her white hands against her small bosom—"if I ever have the chance, how much I shall give!"

"I know it! I know it!" he replied. "You will make some man happier than ever man was before." His infatuation did not blind him to the fact that she cared nothing about him, looked on him in the most unpersonal way. But that knowledge seemed only to inflame him the more, to lash him on to the folly of an ill-timed declaration. "I have felt how much you will give—how much you will love—I've felt it from the second time I saw you—perhaps from the first. I've

never seen any woman who interested me as you do—who drew me as you do—against my ambition—against my will. I—I——"

He had been fighting against the words that would come in spite of him. He halted now because the flood of emotion suffocated speech. He stood before her, ghastly pale and trembling. She did not draw back. She seemed compelled by his will, by the force of his passion, to stay where she was. But in her eyes was a fascinated terror—a fear of him—of the passion that dominated him, a passion like the devils that made men gash themselves and leap from precipices into the sea. To unaccustomed eyes the first sight of passion is always terrifying and is usually repellent. One must learn to adventure the big wave, the great hissing, towering billow that conceals behind its menace the wild rapture of infinite longing realized.

"I have frightened you?" he said.

"Yes," was her whispered reply.

"But it is your dream come true."

She shrank back—not in aversion, but gently. "No—it isn't my dream," she replied.

"You don't realize it yet, but you will."

She shook her head positively. "I couldn't ever think of you in that way."

He did not need to ask why. She had already explained when they were talking of Tetlow. There was a finality in her tone that filled him with despair. It

was his turn to look at her in terror. What power this slim delicate girl had over him! What a price she could exact if she but knew! Knew? Why, he had told her—was telling her in look and tone and gesture —was giving himself frankly into captivity—was prostrate, inviting her to trample. His only hope of escape lay in her inexperience—that she would not realize. In the insanities of passion, as in some other forms of dementia, there is always left a streak of reason—of that craft which leads us to try to get what we want as cheaply as possible. Men, all but beside themselves with love, will bargain over the terms, if they be of the bargaining kind by nature. Norman was not a haggler. But common prudence was telling him how unwise his conduct was, how he was inviting the defeat of his own purposes.

He waved his hand impatiently. "We'll see, my dear," he said with a light good-humored laugh. "I mustn't forget that I came to see your father."

She looked at him doubtfully. She did not understand—did not quite like—this abrupt change of mood. It suggested to her simplicity a lack of seriousness, of sincerity. "Do you really wish to see my father?" she inquired.

"Why else should I come away over to Jersey City? Couldn't I have talked with you at the office?"

This seemed convincing. She continued to study his face for light upon the real character of this strange

new sort of man. He regarded her with a friendly humorous twinkle in his eyes. "Then I'll take you to him," she said at length. She was by no means satisfied, but she could not discover why she was dissatisfied.

"I can't possibly do you any harm," he urged, with raillery.

"No, I think not," replied she gravely. "But you mustn't say those things!"

"Why not?" Into his eyes came their strongest, most penetrating look. "I want you. And I don't intend to give you up. It isn't my habit to give up. So, sooner or later I get what I go after."

"You make me—afraid," she said nervously.

"Of what?" laughed he. "Not of me, certainly. Then it must be of yourself. You are afraid you will end by wanting me to want you."

"No—not that," declared she, confused by his quick cleverness of speech. "I don't know what I'm afraid of."

"Then let's go to your father. . . . You'll not tell Tetlow what I've said?"

"No." And once more her simple negation gave him a sense of her absolute truthfulness.

"Or that I've been here?"

She looked astonished. "Why not?"

"Oh—office reasons. It wouldn't do for the others to know."

She reflected on this. "I don't understand," was

the result of her thinking. "But I'll do as you ask. Only, you must not come again."

"Why not? If they knew at the office, they'd simply talk—unpleasantly."

"Yes," she admitted hesitatingly after reflecting. "So you mustn't come again. I don't like some kinds of secrets."

"But your father will know," he urged. "Isn't that enough for—for propriety?"

"I can't explain. I don't understand, myself. I do a lot of things by instinct." She, standing with her hands behind her back and with clear, childlike eyes gravely upon him, looked puzzled but resolved. "And my instinct tells me not to do anything secret about you."

This answer made him wonder whether after all he might not be too positive in his derisive disbelief in women's instincts. He laughed. "Well—now for your father."

The workshop proved to be an annex to the rear, reached by a passage leading past a cosy little dining room and a kitchen where the order and the shine of cleanness were notable even to masculine eyes. "You are well taken care of," he said to her—she was preceding him to show the way.

"We take care of ourselves," replied she. "I get breakfast before I leave and supper after I come home. Father has a cold lunch in the middle of the day, when

he eats at all—which isn't often. And on Saturday afternoons and Sundays I do the heavy work."

"You *are* a busy lady!"

"Oh, not so very busy. Father is a crank about system and order. He has taught me to plan everything and work by the plans."

For the first time Norman had a glimmer of real interest in meeting her father. For in those remarks of hers he recognized at once the rare superior man—the man who works by plan, where the masses of mankind either drift helplessly or are propelled by some superior force behind them without which they would be, not the civilized beings they seem, but even as the savage in the dugout or as the beast of the field. The girl opened a door; a bright light streamed into the dim hallway.

"Father!" she called. "Here's Mr. Norman."

Norman saw, beyond the exquisite profile of the girl's head and figure, a lean tallish old man, dark and gray, whose expression proclaimed him at first glance no more in touch with the affairs of active life in the world than had he been an inhabitant of Mars.

Mr. Hallowell gave his caller a polite glance and handshake—evidence of merest surface interest in him, of amiable patience with an intruder. Norman saw in the neatness of his clothing and linen further proof of the girl's loving care. For no such abstracted personality as this would ever bother about such things

for himself. These details, however, detained Norman only for a moment. In the presence of Hallowell it was impossible not to concentrate upon him.

As we grow older what we are inside, the kind of thoughts we admit as our intimates, appears ever more strongly in the countenance. This had often struck Norman, observing the men of importance about him, noting how as they aged the look of respectability, of intellectual distinction, became a thinner and ever thinner veneer over the selfishness and greediness, the vanity and sensuality and falsehood. But never before had he been so deeply impressed by its truth. Evidently Hallowell during most of his fifty-five or sixty years had lived the purely intellectual life. The result was a look of spiritual beauty, the look of the soul living in the high mountain, with serenity and vast views constantly before it. Such a face fills with awe the ordinary follower of the petty life of the world if he have the brains to know or to suspect the ultimate truth about existence. It filled Norman with awe. He hastily turned his eyes upon the girl—and once more into his face came the resolute, intense, white-hot expression of a man doggedly set upon an earthy purpose.

There was an embarrassed silence. Then the girl said, "Show him the worms, father."

Mr. Hallowell smiled. "My little girl thinks no one has seen that sort of thing," said he. "I can't make her believe it is one of the commonplaces."

"You've never had anyone here more ignorant than I, sir," said Norman. "The only claim on your courtesy I can make is that I'm interested and that I perhaps know enough in a general way to appreciate."

Hallowell waved his hand toward a row of large glass bottles on one of the many shelves built against the rough walls of the room. "Here they are," said he. "It's the familiar illustration of how life may be controlled."

"I don't understand," said Norman, eying the bottled worms curiously.

"Oh, it's simply the demonstration that life is a mere chemical process——"

Norman had ceased to listen. The girl was moving toward the door by which they had entered—was in the doorway—was gone! He stood in an attitude of attention; Hallowell talked on and on, passing from one thing to another, forgetting his caller and himself, thinking only of the subject, the beloved science, that has brought into the modern world a type of men like those who haunted the deserts and mountain caves in the days when Rome was falling to pieces. With those saintly hermits of the Dark Ages religion was the all-absorbing subject. And seeking their own salvation was the goal upon which their ardent eyes were necessarily bent. With these modern devotees, science—the search for the truth about the world in which they live—is their religion; and their goal is the redemption of

the world. They are resolved—step by step, each worker contributing his mite of discovery—to transform the world from a hell of discomfort and pain and death to a heaven where men and women, free and enlightened and perhaps immortal, shall live in happiness. They even dream that perhaps this race of gods shall learn to construct the means to take them to another and younger planet, when this Earth has become too old and too cold and too nakedly clad in atmosphere properly to sustain life.

From time to time Norman caught a few words of what Hallowell said—words that made him respect the intelligence that had uttered them. But he neither cared nor dared to listen. He refused to be deflected from his one purpose. When he was as old as Hallowell, it would be time to think of these matters. When he had snatched the things he needed, it would be time to take the generous, wide, philosopher view of life. But not yet. He was still young; he could—and he would!—drink of the sparkling heady life of the senses, typefied now for him in this girl. How her loveliness flamed in his blood—flamed as fiercely when he could not see the actual, tangible charms as when they were radiating their fire into his eyes and through his skin! First he must live that glorious life of youth, of nerves aquiver with ecstasy. Also, he must shut out the things of the intellect—must live in brain as well as in body the animal life — in brain the life of cunning and

strategy. For the intellectual life would make it impossible to pursue such ignoble things. First, material success and material happiness. Then, in its own time, this intellectual life to which such men as Hallowell ever beckon, from their heights, such men as Norman, deep in the wallow that seems to them unworthy of them, even as they roll in it.

As soon as there came a convenient pause in Hallowell's talk, Norman said, "And you devote your whole life to these things?"

Hallowell's countenance lost its fine glow of enthusiasm. "I have to make a living. I do chemical analyses for doctors and druggists. That takes most of my time."

"But you can dispatch those things quickly."

Hallowell shook his head. "There's only one way to do things. My clients trust me. I can't shirk."

Norman smiled. He admired this simplicity. But it amused him, too; in a world of shirking and shuffling, not to speak of downright dishonesty, it struck the humorous note of the incongruous. He said:

"But if you could give all your time you would get on faster."

"Yes—if I had the time—*and* the money. To make the search exhaustive would take money—five or six thousand a year, at the least. A great deal more than I shall ever have."

"Have you tried to interest capitalists?"

Hallowell smiled ironically. "There is much talk about capitalists and capital opening up things. But I have yet to learn of an instance of their touching anything until they were absolutely sure of large profits. Their failed enterprises are not miscarriage of noble purpose but mistaken judgment, judgment blinded by hope and greed."

"I see that a philosopher can know life without living it," said Norman. "But couldn't you put your scheme in such a way that some capitalist would be led to hope?"

"I'd have to tell them the truth. Possibly I might discover something with commercial value, but I couldn't promise. I don't think it is likely."

Norman's eyes were on the door. His thoughts were reaching out to the distant and faint sound of a piano. "Just what do you propose to search for?" inquired he.

He tried to listen, because it was necessary that he have some knowledge of Hallowell's plans. But he could not fix his attention. After a few moments he glanced at his watch, interrupted with, "I think I understand enough for the present. I've stayed longer than I intended. I must go now. When I come again I may perhaps have some plan to propose."

"Plan?" exclaimed Hallowell, his eyes lighting up.

"I'm not sure—not at all sure," hastily added Norman. "I don't wish to give you false hopes. The

matter is extremely difficult. But I'll try. I've small hope of success, but I'll try."

"My daughter didn't explain to me," said the scientist. "She simply said one of the gentlemen for whom she worked was coming to look at my place. I thought it was mere curiosity."

"So it was, Mr. Hallowell," said Norman. "But I have been interested. I don't as yet see what can be done. I'm only saying that I'll think it over."

"I understand," said Hallowell. He was trying to seem calm and indifferent. But his voice had the tremulous note of excitement in it and his hands fumbled nervously, touching evidence of the agitated gropings of his mind in the faint, perhaps illusory, light of a new-sprung hope. "Yes, I understand perfectly. Still—it is pleasant to think about such a thing, even if there's no chance of it. I am very fond of dreaming. That has been my life, you know."

Norman colored, moved uneasily. The fineness of this man's character made him uncomfortable. He could pity Hallowell as a misguided failure. He could dilate himself as prosperous, successful, much the more imposing and important figure in the contrast. Yet there was somehow a point of view at which, if one looked carefully, his own sort of man shriveled and the Hallowell sort towered.

"I *must* be going," Norman said. "No—don't come with me. I know the way. I've interrupted you

long enough." And he put out his hand and, by those little clevernesses of manner which he understood so well, made it impossible for Hallowell to go with him to Dorothy.

He was glad when he shut the door between him and her father. He paused in the hall to dispel the vague, self-debasing discomfort—and listening to *her* voice as she sang helped wonderfully. There is no more trying test of a personality than to be estimated by the voice alone. That test produces many strange and startling results. Again and again it completely reverses our judgment of the personality, either destroys or enhances its charm. The voice of this girl, floating out upon the quiet of the cottage—the voice, soft and sweet, full of the virginal passion of dreams unmarred by experience— It was while listening to her voice, as he stood there in the dimly lighted hall, that Frederick Norman passed under the spell in all its potency. In taking an anæsthetic there is the stage when we reach out for its soothing effects; then comes the stage when we half desire, half fear; then a stage in which fear is dominant, and we struggle to retain our control of the senses. Last comes the stage when we feel the full power of the drug and relax and yield or are beaten down into quiet. Her voice drew him into the final stage, was the blow of the overwhelming wave's crest that crushed him into submission.

She glanced toward the door. He was leaning

there, an ominous calm in his pale, resolute face. She gazed at him with widening eyes. And her look was the look of helplessness before a force that may, indeed must, be struggled against, but with the foregone certainty of defeat.

A gleam of triumph shone in his eyes. Then his expression changed to one more conventional. "I stopped a moment to listen, on my way out," said he.

Her expression changed also. The instinctive, probably unconscious response to his look faded into the sweet smile, serious rather than merry, that was her habitual greeting. "Mr. Tetlow didn't get away from father so soon."

"I stayed longer than I intended. I found it even more interesting than I had expected. . . . Would you be glad if your father could be free to do as he likes and not be worried about anything?"

"That is one of my dreams."

"Well, it's certainly one that might come true. . . . And you— It's a shame that you should have to do so much drudgery—both here and in New York."

"Oh, I don't mind about myself. It's all I'm fit for. I haven't any talent—except for dreaming."

"And for making—*some* man's dreams come true."

Her gaze dropped. And as she hid herself she looked once more almost as insignificant and colorless as he had once believed her to be.

"What are you thinking about?"

She shook her head slowly without raising her eyes or emerging from the deep recess of her reserve.

"You are a mystery to me. I can't decide whether you are very innocent or very—concealing."

She glanced inquiringly at him. "I don't understand," she said.

He smiled. "No more do I. I've seen so much of faking—in women as well as in men—that it's hard for me to believe anyone is genuine."

"Do you think I am trying to deceive you? About what?"

He made an impatient gesture—impatience with his credulity where she was concerned. "No matter. I want to make you happy—because I want you to make me happy."

Her eyes became as grave as a wondering child's. "You are laughing at me," she said.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I could not make you happy."

"Why not?"

"What could a serious man like you find in me?"

His intense, burning gaze held hers. "Some time I will tell you."

She shut herself within herself like a flower folding away its beauty and leaving exposed only the colorless underside of its petals. It was impossible to say whether she understood or was merely obeying an instinct.

He watched her a moment in silence. Then he said:

"I am mad about you—mad. You *must* understand. I can think only of you. I am insane with jealousy of you. I want you—I must have you."

He would have seized her in his arms, but the look of sheer amazement she gave him protected her where no protest or struggle would. "You?" she said. "Did you really mean it? I thought you were just talking."

"Can't you see that I mean it?"

"Yes—you look as if you did. But I can't believe it. I could never think of you in that way."

Once more that frank statement of indifference infuriated him. He *must* compel her to feel—he must give that indifference the lie—and at once! He caught her in his arms. He rained kisses upon her pale face. She made not the least resistance, but seemed dazed. "I will teach you to love me," he cried, drunk now with the wine of her lips, with the perfume of her exquisite youth. "I will make you happy. We shall be mad with happiness."

She gently freed herself. "I don't believe I could ever think of you in that way."

"Yes, darling—you will. You can't help loving where you are loved so utterly."

She gazed at him wonderingly—the puzzled wonder of a child. "You—love—me?" she said slowly.

"Call it what you like. I am mad about you. I have forgotten everything—pride—position—things you can't imagine—and I care for nothing but you."

And again he was kissing her with the soft fury of fire; and again she was submitting with the passive, dazed expression that seemed to add to his passion. To make her feel! To make her respond! He, whom so many women had loved—women of position, of fame for beauty, of social distinction or distinction as singers, players—women of society and women of talent—all kinds of worth-while women—they had cared, had run after him, had given freely all he had asked and more. And this girl—nobody at all—she had nothing for him.

He held her away from him, cried angrily: "What is the matter with you? What is the matter with me?"

"I don't understand," she said. "I wish you wouldn't kiss me so much."

He released her, laughed satirically. "Oh—you are playing a game. I might have known."

"I don't understand," said she. "A while ago you said you loved me. Now you act as if you didn't like me at all." And she smiled gayly at him, pouting her lips a little. Once more her beauty was shining. It made his nerves quiver to see the color in her pure white skin where he had kissed her.

"I don't care whether it is a game or not," he cried. And he was about to seize her again, when she repulsed him. He crushed her resistance, held her tight in his arms.

"You frighten me," she murmured. "You—hurt me."

He released her. "What do you want?" he cried. "Don't you care at all?"

"Oh, yes. I like you—very much. I have from the first time I saw you. But you seem older—and more serious."

"Never mind about that. We are going to love each other—and I am going to make you and your father happy."

"If you make father happy I will do anything for you. I don't want anything myself—but he is getting old and sometimes his despair is terrible." There were tears in her voice—tears and the most touching tenderness. "He has some great secret that he wants to discover, and he is afraid he will die without having had the chance."

"You will love me if I make your father happy?"

He knew it was the question of a fool, but he so longed to hear from her lips some word to give him hope that he could not help asking it. She said:

"Love you as—as you seem to love me? Not that same way. I don't feel that way toward you. But I will love you in my own way."

He observed her with penetrating eyes. Was this speech of hers innocence or calculation? He could get no clue to the truth. He saw nothing but innocence; the teaching of experience warned him to believe in nothing but guile. He hid his doubt and chagrin behind a mocking smile. "As you please," said he. "I

will do my part. Then—we'll see. . . . Do you care about anyone else—in *my* way of loving, I mean?"

It was again the question of an infatuated fool, and put in an infatuated fool's way. For, if she were a "deep one," how could he hope to get the truth? But her answer reassured him. "No," she said—her simple, direct negation that had a convincing power he had never seen equaled.

"If I ever knew of another man's touching you," he said, "I'd feel like strangling him." He laughed at himself. "Not that I should strangle him. That sort of thing isn't done any more. But I'd do something devilish."

"But I haven't promised not to kiss anyone else," she said. "Why should I? I don't love you."

He looked at her strangely. "But you're going to love me," he said.

She shrank within herself again. She looked at him with uneasy eyes. "You won't kiss me any more until I tell you that I do love you?" she asked with the gravity and pathos and helplessness of a child.

"Don't you want to learn to love me?—to learn to love?"

She was silent—a silence that maddened him.

"Don't be afraid to speak," he said irritably. "What are you thinking?"

"That I don't want you to kiss me—and that I do want father to be happy."

Was this guile? Was it innocence? He put his arms round her. "Look at me," he said.

She gazed at him frankly.

"You like me?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you want me to kiss you?"

"I don't know. It makes me—dislike you."

He released her. She laid her hand on his arm eagerly. "Please—" she implored. "I don't mean to hurt you. I wouldn't offend you for anything. Only —when you ask me a question—mustn't I tell you the truth?"

"Always," he said, believing in her, in spite of the warnings of cynical worldliness. "I don't know whether you are sincere or not—as yet. So for the present I'll give you the benefit of the doubt." He stood back and looked at her from head to foot. "You are beautiful!—perfect," he said in a low voice. He laughed. "I'll resist the temptation to kiss you again. I must go now. About your father—I'll see what can be done."

She stood with her hands behind her back, looking up at him with an expression he could not fathom. Suddenly she advanced, put up her lips and said gravely, "Won't you kiss me?"

He eyed her quizzically. "Oh—you've changed your mind?"

She shook her head.

"Then why do you ask me to kiss you?"

"Because of what you said about father."

He laughed and kissed her. And then she, too, laughed. He said, "Not for my own sake—not a little bit?"

"Oh, yes," she cried, "when you kiss me that way. I like to be kissed. I am very affectionate."

He laughed again. "You *are* a queer one. If it's a game, it's a good one. Is it a game?"

"I don't know," said she gayly. "Good night. This is dreadfully late for me."

"Good night," he said, and they shook hands. "Do you like me better—or less?"

"Better," was her prompt, apparently honest reply.

"Curiously enough, I'm beginning to *like* you," said he. "Now don't ask me what I mean by that. If you don't know already, you'll not find out from me."

"Oh, but I do know," cried she. "The way you kissed me—that was one thing. The way you feel toward me now—that's a different thing. Isn't it so?"

"Exactly. I see we are going to get on."

"Yes, indeed."

They shook hands again in friendliest fashion, and she opened the front door for him. And her farewell smile was bright and happy.

VII

In the cold clear open he proceeded to take the usual account of stock—with dismal results. She had wound him round her fingers, had made him say only the things he should not have said, and leave unsaid the things that might have furthered his purposes. He had conducted the affair ridiculously—"just what is to be expected of an infatuated fool." However, there was no consolation in the discovery that he was reduced, after all these years of experience, to the common level —man weak and credulous in his dealings with woman. He hoped that his disgust with himself would lead on to disgust, or, rather, distaste for her. It is the primal instinct of vanity to dislike and to shun those who have witnessed its humiliation.

"I believe I am coming to my senses," he said. And he ventured to call her up before him for examination and criticism. This as he stood upon the forward deck of the ferry with the magnificent panorama of New York before him. New York! And he, of its strong men, of the few in all that multitude who had rank and power—he who had won as his promised wife the daughter of one of the dozen mighty ones of the nation!

What an ill-timed, what an absurd, what a crazy step-down this excursion of his! And for what? There he summoned her before him. And at the first glance of his fancy at her fair sweet face and lovely figure, he quailed. He was hearing her voice again. He was feeling the yield of her smooth, round form to his embrace, the yield of her smooth white cheek to his caress. In his nostrils was the fragrance of her youth, the matchless perfume of nature, beyond any of the distillations of art in its appeal to his normal and healthy nerves. And he burned with the fire only she could quench. "I must —I must!—My God, I *must!*" he muttered.

When he reached home, he asked whether his sister was in. The butler said that Mrs. Fitzhugh had just come from the theater. In search of her, he went to the library, found her seated there with a book and a cigarette, her wrap thrown back upon her chair. "Come out to supper with me, Ursula," he said. "I'm starved and bored."

"Why, you're not dressed!" exclaimed his sister. "I thought you were at the Cameron dance with Josephine."

"Had to cut it out," replied he curtly. "Will you come?"

"I can't eat, but I'll drink. Yes, let's have a spree. It's been years since we had one—not since we were poor. Let's not go to a *deadly* respectable place. Let's go where there are some of the other kind, too."

"But I must have food. Why not the Martin?"

"That'll do—though I'd prefer something a little farther up Broadway."

"The Martin is gay enough. The truth is, there's nothing really gay any more. There's too much money. Money suffocates gayety."

To the Martin they went, and he ordered an enormous supper—one of those incredible meals for which he was famous. They dispatched a quart of champagne before the supper began to come, he drinking at least two thirds of it. He drank as much while he was eating—and called for a third bottle when the coffee was served. He had eaten half a dozen big oysters, a whole guinea hen, a whole portion of salad, another of Boniface cheese, with innumerable crackers.

"If I could eat as you do!" sighed Ursula enviously. "Yet it's only one of your accomplishments."

"I'm not eating much nowadays," said he gloomily. "I'm losing my appetite." And he lit a long black cigar and swallowed half a large glass of the champagne. "Nothing tastes good—not even champagne."

"There *is* something wrong with you," said Ursula. "Did you ask me out for confidences, or for advice—or for both?"

"None of them," replied he. "Only for company. I knew I'd not be able to sleep for hours, and I wanted to put off the time when I'd be alone."

"I wish I had as much influence with you as you

have with me," said Ursula, by way of preparation for confidences.

"Influence? Don't I do whatever you say?"

She laughed. "Nobody has influence over you," she said.

"Not even myself," replied he morosely.

"Well—that talking-to you gave me has had its effect," proceeded Mrs. Fitzhugh. "It set me to thinking. There are other things besides love—man and woman love. I've decided to—to behave myself and give poor Clayton a chance to rest." She smiled, a little maliciously. "He's had a horrible fright. But it's over now. What a fine thing it is for a woman to have a sensible brother!"

Norman grunted, took another liberal draught of the champagne.

"If I had a mind like yours!" pursued Ursula. "Now, you simply couldn't make a fool of yourself."

He looked at her sharply. He felt as if she had somehow got wind of his eccentric doings.

"I've always resented your rather contemptuous attitude toward women," she went on. "But you are right—really you are. We're none of us worth the excitement men make about us."

"It isn't the woman who makes a fool of the man," said Norman. "It's the man who makes a fool of himself. A match can cause a terrific explosion if it's in the right place—but not if it isn't."

She nodded. "That's it. We're simply matches—and most of us of the poor sputtering kind that burns with a bad odor and goes out right away. A very inferior quality of matches."

"Yes," repeated Norman, "it's the man who does the whole business."

A mocking smile curled her lips. "I knew you weren't in love with Josephine."

He stared gloomily at his cigar.

"But you're going to marry her?"

"I'm in love with her," he said angrily. "And I'm going to marry her."

She eyed him shrewdly. "Fred—are you in love with some one else?"

He did not answer immediately. When he did it was with a "No" that seemed the more emphatic for the delay.

"Oh, just one of your little affairs." And she began to poke fun at him. "I thought you had dropped that sort of thing for good and all. I hope Josie won't hear of it. She'd not understand. Women never do—unless they don't care a rap about the man. . . . Is she on the stage? I know you'll not tell me, but I like to ask."

Her brother looked at her rather wildly. "Let's go home," he said. He was astounded and alarmed by the discovery that his infatuation had whirled him to the lunacy of longing to confide—and he feared lest, if

he should stay on, he would blurt out his disgraceful secret. "Waiter, the bill."

"Don't let's go yet," urged his sister. "The most interesting people are beginning to come. Besides, I want more champagne."

He yielded. While she gazed round with the air of a visitor to a Zoo that is affected by fashionable people, and commented on the faces, figures, and clothes of the women, he stared at his plate and smoked and drank. Finally she said, "I'd give anything to see you make a fool of yourself, just once."

He grinned. "Things are in the way to having your wish gratified," he said. "It looks to me as if my time had come."

She tried to conceal her anxiety. "Are you serious?" she asked. Then added: "Of course not. You simply couldn't. Especially now — when Josephine might hear. I suppose you've noticed how Joe Culver is hanging round her?"

He nodded.

"There's no danger—unless——"

"I shall marry Josephine."

"Not if she hears."

"She's not going to hear."

"Don't be too sure. Women love to boast. It tickles their vanity to have a man. Yes, they pretend to be madly in love simply to give themselves the excuse for tattling."

"She'll not hear."

"You can't be sure."

"I want you to help me out. I'm going to tell her I'm tremendously busy these few next days—or weeks."

"Weeks!" Ursula Fitzhugh laughed. "My, it must be serious!"

"Weeks," repeated her brother. "And I want you to say things that'll help out—and to see a good deal of her." He flung down his cigar. "You women don't understand how it is with a man."

"Don't we though! Why, it's a very ordinary occurrence for a woman to be really in love with several men at once."

His eyes gleamed jealously. "I don't believe it," he cried.

"Not Josephine," she said reassuringly. "She's one of those single-hearted, untemperamental women. They concentrate. They have no imagination."

"I wasn't thinking of Josephine," said he sullenly. "To go back to what I was saying, I am in love with Josephine and with no one else. I can't explain to you how or why I'm entangled. But I'll get myself untangled all right—and very shortly."

"I know that, Fred. You aren't the permanent-damn-fool sort."

"I should say not!" exclaimed he. "It's a hopeful sign that I know exactly how big a fool I am."

She shook her head in strong dissent. "On the con-

trary," said she, "it's a bad sign. I didn't realize I was making a fool of myself until you pointed it out to me. That stopped me. If I had been doing it with my eyes open, your jacking me up would only have made me go ahead."

"A woman's different. It doesn't take much to stop a woman. She's about half stopped when she begins."

Ursula was thoroughly alarmed. "Fred," she said earnestly, "you're running bang into danger. The time to stop is right now."

"Can't do it," he said. "Let's not talk about it."

"Can't? That word from *you?*"

"From me," replied he. "Don't forget helping out with Josephine. Let's go."

And he refused to be persuaded to stay on—or to be cajoled or baited into talking further of this secret his sister saw was weighing heavily.

He was down town half an hour earlier than usual the next morning. But no one noted it because his habit had always been to arrive among the first—not to set an example but to give his prodigious industry the fullest swing. There was in Turkey a great poet of whom it is said that he must have written twenty-five hours a day. Norman's accomplishment bulked in that same way before his associates. He had not slept the whole night. But, thanks to his enormous vitality, no trace of this serious dissipation showed. The huge

supper he had eaten—and drunk—the sleepless night and the giant breakfast of fruit and cereal and chops and wheat cakes and coffee he had laid in to stay him until lunch time, would together have given pause to any but such a physical organization as his. The only evidence of it was a certain slight irritability—but this may have been due to his state of intense self-dissatisfaction.

As he entered the main room his glance sought the corner where Miss Hallowell was ensconced. She happened to look up at that instant. With a radiant smile she bowed to him in friendliest fashion. He colored deeply, frowned with annoyance, bowed coldly and strode into his room. He fussed and fretted about with his papers for a few minutes, then rang the bell.

"Send in Miss Pritchard—no, Mr. Gowdy—no, Miss Hallowell," he said to the office boy. And then he looked sharply at the pert young face for possible signs of secret cynical amusement. He saw none such, but was not convinced. He knew too well how by a sort of occult process the servants, all the subordinates, round a person like himself discover the most intimate secrets, almost get the news before anything has really occurred.

Miss Hallowell appeared, and very cold and reserved she looked as she stood waiting.

"I sent for you because—" he began. He glanced at the door to make sure that it was closed—"because

I wanted to hear your voice." And he laughed boyishly. He was in high good humor now.

"Why did you speak to me as you did when you came in?" said she.

There was certainly novelty in this direct attack, this equal to equal criticism of his manners. He was not pleased with the novelty; but at the same time he felt a lack of the courage to answer her as she deserved, even if she was playing a clever game. "It isn't necessary that the whole office should know our private business," said he.

She seemed astonished. "What private business?"

"Last night," said he, uncertain whether she was trifling with him or was really the innocent she pretended to be. "If I were you, I'd not speak as friendlily as you did this morning—not before people."

"Why?" inquired she, her sweet young face still more perplexed.

"This isn't a small town out West," explained he. "It's New York. People misunderstand—or rather—" He gave her a laughing, mischievous glance—"or rather—they don't."

"I can't see anything to make a mystery about," declared the girl. "Why, you act as if there were something to be ashamed of in coming to see me."

He was observing her sharply. How could a girl live in the New York atmosphere several years without getting a sensible point of view? Yet, so far as he

could judge, this girl was perfectly honest in her ignorance. "Don't be foolish," said he. "Please accept the fact as I give it to you. You mustn't let people see everything."

She made no attempt to conceal her dislike for this. "I won't be mixed up in anything like that," said she, quite gently and without a suggestion of pique or anger. "It makes me feel low—and it's horribly common. Either we are going to be friends or we aren't. And if we are, why, we're friends whenever we meet. I'm not ashamed of you. And if you are ashamed of me, you can cut me out altogether."

His color deepened until his face was crimson. His eyes avoided hers. "I was thinking chiefly of you," he said—and he honestly thought he was speaking the whole truth.

"Then please don't do so any more," said she, turning to go. "I understand about New York snobbishness. I want nothing to do with it."

He disregarded the danger of the door being opened at any moment. He rushed to her and took her reluctant hand. "You mustn't blame me for the ways of the world. I can't change them. Do be sensible, dearest. You're only going to be here a few days longer. I've got that plan for you and your father all thought out. I'll put it through at once. I don't want the office talking scandal about us—do you?"

She looked at him pityingly. His eyes fell before

hers. "I know it's a weakness," he said, giving up trying to deceive her and himself. "But I can't help it. I was brought up that way."

"Well—*I* wasn't. I see we can never be friends."

What a mess he had made of this affair! This girl must be playing upon him. In his folly he had let her see how completely he was in her power, and she was using that power to establish relations between them that were the very opposite of what he desired—and must have. He must control himself. "As you please," he said coldly, dropping her hand. "I'm sorry, but unless you are reasonable I can do nothing for you." And he went to his desk.

She hesitated a moment; as her back was toward him, he could not see her expression. Without looking round she went out of his office. It took all his strength to let her go. "She's bluffing," he muttered. "And yet—perhaps she isn't. There may be people like that left in New York." Whatever the truth, he simply must make a stand. He knew women; no woman had the least respect for a man who let her rule—and this woman, relying upon his weakness for her, was bent upon ruling. If he did not make a stand, she was lost to him. If he did make a stand, he could no more than lose her. Lose her! That thought made him sick at heart. "What a fool I am about her!" he cried. "I must hurry things up. I must get enough of her—must get through it and back to my sober senses."

That was a time of heavy pressure of important affairs. He furiously attacked one task after another, only to abandon each in turn. His mind, which had always been his obedient, very humble servant, absolutely refused to obey. He turned everything over to his associates or to subordinates, fighting all morning against the longing to send for her. At half past twelve he strode out of the office, putting on the air of the big man absorbed in big affairs. He descended to the street. But instead of going up town to keep an appointment at a business lunch he hung round the entrance to the opposite building.

She did not appear until one o'clock. Then out she came — with the head office boy! — the good-looking, young head office boy.

Norman's contempt for himself there reached its lowest ebb. For his blood boiled with jealousy—jealousy of his head office boy!—and about an obscure little typewriter! He followed the two, keeping to the other side of the street. Doubtless those who saw and recognized him fancied him deep in thought about some mighty problem of corporate law or policy, as he moved from and to some meeting with the great men who dictated to a nation of ninety millions what they should buy and how much they should pay for it. He saw the two enter a quick-lunch restaurant—struggled with a crack-brained impulse to join them—dragged himself away to his appointment.

He was never too amiable in dealing with his clients, because he had found that, in self-protection, to avoid being misunderstood and largely increasing the difficulties of amicable intercourse, he must keep the feel of iron very near the surface. That day he was for the first time irascible. If the business his clients were engaged in had been less perilous and his acute intelligence not indispensable, he would have cost the firm dear. But in business circles, where every consideration yields to that of material gain, the man with the brain may conduct himself as he pleases—and usually does so, when he has strength of character.

All afternoon he wrestled with himself to keep away from the office. He won, but it was the sort of victory that gives the winner the chagrin and despondency of defeat. At home, late in the afternoon, he found Josephine in the doorway, just leaving. "You'll walk home with me—won't you?" she said. And, taken unawares and intimidated by guilt, he could think of no excuse.

Some one—probably a Frenchman—has said that there are always in a man's life three women—the one on the way out, the one that is, and the one that is to be. Norman—ever the industrious trafficker with the feminine that the man of the intense vitality necessary to a great career of action is apt to be—was by no means new to the situation in which he now found himself. But never before had the circumstances been so difficult. Josephine in no way resembled any woman

with whom he had been involved; she was the first he had taken seriously. Nor did the other woman resemble the central figure in any of his affairs. He did not know what she was like, how to classify her; but he did know that she was unlike any woman he had ever known and that his feeling for her was different—appallingly different—from any emotion any other woman had inspired in him. So—a walk alone with Josephine—a first talk with her after his secret treachery—was no light matter. "Deeper and deeper," he said to himself. "Where is this going to end?"

She began by sympathizing with him for having so much to do—"and father says you can get through more work than any man he ever knew, not excluding himself." She was full of tenderness and compliment, of a kind of love that made him feel as the dirt beneath his feet. She respected him so highly; she believed in him so entirely. The thought of her discovering the truth, or any part of it, gave him a sensation of nausea. He was watching her out of the corner of his eye. Never had he seen her more statelily beautiful. If he should lose her! "I'm mad—*mad!*" he said to himself. "Josephine is as high above her as heaven above earth. What is there to her, anyhow? Not brains—nor taste—nor such miraculous beauty. Why do I make an ass of myself about her? I ought to go to my doctor."

"I don't believe you're listening to what I'm saying," laughed Josephine.

"My head's in a terrible state," replied he. "I can't think of anything."

"Don't try to talk or to listen, dearest," said she in the sweet and soothing tone that is neither sweet nor soothing to a man in a certain species of unresponsive mood. "This air will do you good. It doesn't annoy you for me to talk to you, does it?"

The question was one of those which confidently expects, even demands, a sincere and strenuous negative for answer. It fretted him, this matter-of-course assumption of hers that she could not but be altogether pleasing, not to say enchanting to him. Her position, her wealth, the attentions she had received, the flatteries— In her circumstances could it be in human nature not to think extremely well of oneself? And he admitted that she had the right so to think. Still— For the first time she scraped upon his nerves. His reply, "Annoy me? The contrary," was distinctly crisp. To an experienced ear there would have sounded the faint warning under-note of sullenness.

But she, believing in his love and in herself, saw nothing, suspected nothing. "We know each other so thoroughly," she went on, "that we don't need to make any effort. How congenial we are! I always understand you. I feel such a sense of the perfect freedom and perfect frankness between us. Don't you?"

"You have wonderful intuitions," said he.

It was the time to alarm him by coldness, by capri-

ciousness. But how could she know it? And she was in love—really in love—not with herself, not with love, but with him. Thus, she made the mistake of all true lovers in those difficult moments. She let him see how absolutely she was his. Nor did the spectacle of her sincerity, of her belief in his sincerity put him in any better humor with himself.

The walk was a mere matter of a dozen blocks. He thought it would never end. "You are sure you aren't ill?" she said, when they were at her door—a superb bronze door it was, opening into a house of the splendor that for the acclimated New Yorker quite conceals and more than compensates absence of individual taste. "You don't look ill. But you act queerly."

"I'm often this way when they drive me too hard down town."

She looked at him with fond admiration; he might have been better pleased had there not been in the look a suggestion of the possessive. "How they do need you! Father says— But I mustn't make you any vainer than you are."

He usually loved compliment, could take it in its rawest form with fine human gusto. Now, he did not care enough about that "father says" to rise to her obvious bait. "I'm horribly tired," he said. "Shall I see you to-morrow? No, I guess not—not for several days. You understand?"

"Perfectly," replied she. "I'll miss you dreadfully,

but my father has trained me well. I know I mustn't be selfish—and tempt you to neglect things."

"Thank you," said he. "I must be off."

"You'll come in—just a moment?" Her eyes sparkled. "The butler will have sense enough to go straight away—and the small reception room will be quite empty as usual."

He could not escape. A few seconds and he was alone with her in the little room—how often had he—they—been glad of its quiet and seclusion on such occasions! She laid her hand upon his shoulders, gazed at him proudly. "It was here," said she, "that you first kissed me. Do you remember?"

To take her gaze from his face and to avoid seeing her look of loving trust, he put his arms round her. "I don't deserve you," he said—one of those empty pretenses of confession that yet give the human soul a sense of truthfulness.

"You'd not say that if you knew how happy you make me," murmured she.

The welcome sound of a step in the hall give him his release. When he was in the street, he wiped his hot face with his handkerchief. "And I thought I had no moral sense left!" he reflected—not the first man, in this climax day of the triumph of selfish philosophies, to be astonished by the discovery that the dead hands of heredity and tradition have a power that can successfully defy reason.

He started to walk back home, on impulse took a passing taxi and went to his club. It was the Federal. They said of it that no man who amounted to anything in New York could be elected a member, because any man on his way up could not but offend one or more of the important persons in control. Most of its members were nominated at birth or in childhood and elected as soon as they were twenty-one. Norman was elected after he became a man of consequence. He regarded it as one of the signal triumphs of his career; and beyond question it was proof of his power, of the eagerness of important men, despite their jealousy, to please him and to be in a position to get the benefit of his brains should need arise. Norman's whole career, like every career great and small, in the arena of action, was a derision of the ancient moralities, a demonstration of the value of fear as an aid to success. Even his friends—and he had as many as he cared to have—had been drawn to him by the desire to placate him, to stand well where there was danger in standing ill.

Until dinner time he stood at the club bar, drinking one cocktail after another with that supreme indifference to consequences to health which made his fellow men gape and wonder—and cost an occasional imitator health, and perhaps life. Nor did the powerful liquor have the least effect upon him, apparently. Possibly he was in a better humor, but not noticeably so. He dined at the club and spent the evening at bridge,

winning several hundred dollars. He enjoyed the consideration he received at that club, for his fellow members being men of both social and financial consequence, their conspicuous respect for him was a concentrated essence of general adulation. He lingered on, eating a great supper with real appetite. He went home in high good humor with himself. He felt that he was a conqueror born, that such things of his desire as did not come could be forced to come. He no longer regarded his passion for the nebulous girl of many personalities as a descent from dignity. Was he not king? Did not his favor give her whatever rank he pleased? Might not a king pick and choose, according to his fancy? Let the smaller fry grow nervous about these matters of caste. They did well to take care lest they should fall. But not he! He had won thus far by haughtiness, never by cringing. His mortal day would be that in which he should abandon his natural tactics for the modes of lesser men. True, only a strong head could remain steady in these giddy altitudes of self-confidence. But was not his head strong?

And without hesitation he called up the vision that made him delirious—and detained it and reveled in it until sleep came.

VIII

The longer he thought of it the stronger grew his doubt that the little Hallowell girl could be so indifferent to him as she seemed. Not that she was a fraud—that is, a conscious fraud—even so much of a fraud as the sincerest of the other women he had known. Simply that she was carrying out a scheme of coquetry. Could it be in human nature, even in the nature of the most indiscriminating of the specimens of young feminine ignorance and folly, not to be flattered by the favor of such a man as he? Common sense answered that it could not be—but neglected to point out to him that almost any vagary might be expected of human nature, when it could produce such a deviation from the recognized types as a man of his position agitated about such an unsought obscurity as Miss Hallowell. He continued to debate the state of her mind as if it were an affair of mightiest moment—which, indeed, it was to him. And presently his doubt strengthened into conviction. She must be secretly pleased, flattered, responsive. She had been in the office long enough to be impressed by his position. Yes, there must be more or less pretense in her

apparently complete indifference—more or less pretense, more or less coquetry, probably not a little timidity.

She would come down from her high horse—with help and encouragement from him. He was impatient to get to the office and see just how she would do it—what absurd, amusing attractive child's trick she would think out, imagining she could fool him, as lesser intelligences are ever fatuously imagining they can outwit greater.

He rather thought she would come in to see him on some pretext, would maneuver round like a bird pretending to flutter away from the trap it has every intention of entering. But eleven o'clock of a wasted morning came and she did not appear. He went out to see if she was there—she must be sick; she could not be there or he would have heard from her. . . . Yes, she was at her desk, exactly as always. No, not exactly the same. She was obviously attractive now; the air of insignificance had gone, and not the dullest eyes in that office could fail to see at least something of her beauty. And Tetlow was hanging over her, while the girls and boys grinned and whispered. Clearly, the office was "on to" Tetlow. . . . Norman, erect and coldly infuriate, called out:

"Mr. Tetlow—one moment, please."

He went back to his den, Tetlow startling and following like one on the way to the bar for sentence. "Mr. Tetlow," he said, when they were shut in to-

gether, "you are making a fool of yourself before the whole office."

"Be a little patient with me, Mr. Norman," said the head clerk humbly. "I've got another place for her. She's going to take it to-morrow. Then—there'll be no more trouble."

Norman paled. "She wishes to leave?" he contrived to articulate.

"She spoke to me about leaving before I told her I had found her another job."

Norman debated—but for only a moment. "I do not wish her to leave," he said coldly. "I find her useful and most trustworthy."

Tetlow's eyes were fixed strangely upon him.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Norman, the under-note of danger but thinly covered.

"Then she was right," said Tetlow slowly. "I thought she was mistaken. I see that she is right."

"What do you mean?" said Norman—a mere inquiry, devoid of bluster or any other form of nervousness.

"You know very well what I mean, Fred Norman," said Tetlow. "And you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Don't stand there scowling and grimacing like an idiot," said Norman with an amused smile. "What do you mean?"

"She told me—about your coming to see her—

about your offer to do something for her father—about your acting in a way that made her uneasy."

For an instant Norman was panic-stricken. Then his estimate of her reassured him. "I took your advice," said he. "I went to see for myself. How did I act that she was made uneasy?"

"She didn't say. But a woman can tell what a man has in the back of his head—when it concerns her. And she is a good woman—so innocent that you ought to be ashamed of yourself for even thinking of her in that way. God has given innocence instincts, and she felt what you were about."

Norman laughed—a deliberate provocation. "Love has made a fool of you, old man," he said.

"I notice you don't deny," retorted Tetlow shrewdly.

"Deny what? There's nothing to deny." He felt secure now that he knew she had been reticent with Tetlow as to the happenings in the cottage.

"Maybe I'm wronging you," said Tetlow, but not in the tone of belief. "However that may be, I know you'll not refuse to listen to my appeal. I love her, Norman. I'm going to make her my wife if I can. And I ask you—for the sake of our old friendship—to let her alone. I've no doubt you could dazzle her. You couldn't make a bad woman of her. But you could make her very miserable."

Norman pushed about the papers before him. His

face wore a cynical smile; but Tetlow, who knew him in all his moods, saw that he was deeply agitated.

"I don't know that I can win her, Fred," he pleaded. "But I feel that I might if I had a fair chance."

"You think she'd refuse *you?*" said Norman.

"Like a flash, unless I'd made her care for me. That's the kind she is."

"That sounds absurd. Why, there isn't a woman in New York who would refuse a chance to take a high jump up."

"I'd have said so, too. But since I've gotten acquainted with her I've learned better. She may be spoiled some day, but she hasn't been yet. God knows, I wish I could tempt her. But I can't."

"You're entirely too credulous, old man. She'll make a fool of you."

"I know better," Tetlow stubbornly maintained. "Anyhow, I don't care. I love her, and I'd marry her, no matter what her reason for marrying me was."

What pitiful infatuation!—worse than his own. Poor Tetlow!—he deserved a better fate than to be drawn into this girl's trap—for, of course, she never could care for such a heavy citizen—heavy and homely—the loosely fat kind of homely that is admired by no one, not even by a woman with no eye at all for the physical points of the male. It would be a real kindness to save worthy Tetlow. What a fool she'd make of him!—how she'd squander his money—and torment

him with jealousy—and unfit him for his career. Poor Tetlow! If he could get what he wanted, he'd be well punished for his imprudence in wanting it. Really, could friendship do him a greater service than to save him?

Norman gave Tetlow a friendly, humorous glance. "You're a hopeless case, Billy," he said. "But at least don't rush into trouble. Take your time. You can always get in, you know; and you may not get in quite so deep."

"You promise to let her alone?" said Tetlow eagerly.

Again his distinguished friend laughed. "Don't be an ass, old man. Why imagine that, just because you've taken a fancy to a girl, everyone wants her?" He clapped him on the shoulder, gave him a push toward the door. "I've wasted enough time on this nonsense."

Tetlow did not venture to disregard a hint so plain. He went with his doubt still unsolved—his doubt whether his jealousy was right or his high opinion of his hero friend whose series of ever-mounting successes had filled him with adoration. He knew the way of success, knew no man could tread it unless he had, or acquired, a certain hardness of heart that made him an uncomfortable not to say dangerous associate. He regretted his own inability to acquire that indispensable hardness, and envied and admired it in Fred Norman. But, at

the same time that he admired, he could not help distrusting.

Norman battled with his insanity an hour, then sent for Miss Hallowell.

The girl had lost her look of strength and vitality. She seemed frail and dim—so unimportant physically that he wondered why her charm for him persisted. Yet it did persist. If he could take her in his arms, could make her drooping beauty revive!—through love for him if possible; if not, then through anger and hate! He must make her feel, must make her acknowledge, that he had power. It seemed to him another instance of the resistless fascination which the unattainable, however unworthy, has ever had for the conqueror temperament.

"You are leaving?" he said curtly, both a question and an affirmation.

"Yes."

"You are making a mistake—a serious mistake."

She stood before him listlessly, as if she had no interest either in what he was saying or in him. That maddening indifference!

"It was a mistake to tattle your trouble to Tetlow."

"I did not tattle," said she quietly, colorlessly. "I said only enough to make him help me."

"And what did he say about me?"

"That I had misjudged you—that I must be mistaken."

Norman laughed. "How seriously the little people of the world do take themselves!"

She looked at him. His amused eyes met hers frankly. "You didn't mean it?" she said.

He beamed on her. "Certainly I did. But I'm not a lunatic or a wild beast. Do you think I would take advantage of a girl in your position?"

Her eyes seemed to grow large and weary, and an expression of experience stole over her young face, giving it a strange appearance of age-in-youth. "It has been done," said she.

How reconcile such a look with the theory of her childlike innocence? But then how reconcile any two of the many varied personalities he had seen in her? He said: "Yes—it has been done. But not by me. I shall take from you only what you gladly give."

"You will get nothing else," said she with quiet strength.

"That being settled—" he went on, holding up a small package of papers bound together by an elastic—"Here are the proposed articles of incorporation of the Chemical Research Company. How do you like the name?"

"What is it?"

"The company that is to back your father. Capital stock, twenty-five thousand dollars, one half paid up. Your father to be employed as director of the laboratories at five thousand a year, with a fund of

ten thousand to draw upon. You to be employed as secretary and treasurer at fifteen hundred a year. I will take the paid-up stock, and your father and you will have the privilege of buying it back at par within five years. Do you follow me?"

"I think I understand," was her unexpected reply. Her replies were usually unexpected, like the expressions of her face and figure; she was continually comprehending where one would have said she would not, and not comprehending where it seemed absurd that she should not. "Yes, I understand. . . . What else?"

"Nothing else."

She looked intently at him, and her eyes seemed to be reading his soul to the bottom.

"Nothing else," he repeated.

"No obligation—for money—or—for anything?"

"No obligation. A hope perhaps." He was smiling with the gayest good humor. "But not the kind of hope that ever becomes a disagreeable demand for payment."

She seated herself, her hands in her lap, her eyes down—a lovely picture of pensive repose. He waited patiently, feasting his senses upon her delicate, aromatic loveliness. At last she said:

"I accept."

He had anticipated an argument. This promptness took him by surprise. He felt called upon to explain, to excuse her acceptance. "I am taking a little flyer

—making a gamble," said he. "Your father may turn up nothing of commercial value. Again the company may pay big——"

She gave him a long look through half-closed eyes, a queer smile flitting round her lips. "I understand perfectly why you are doing it," she said. "Do *you* understand why I am accepting?"

"Why should you refuse?" rejoined he. "It is a good business prop——"

"You know very well why I should refuse. But—" She gave a quiet laugh of experience; it made him feel that she was making a fool of him—"I shall not refuse. I am able to take care of myself. And I want father to have his chance. Of course, I shan't explain to him." She gave him a mischievous glance. "And I don't think *you* will."

He contrived to cover his anger, doubt, chagrin, general feeling of having been outwitted. "No, I shan't tell him," laughed he. "You are making a great fool of me."

"Do you want to back out?"

What audacity! He hesitated—did not dare. Her indifference to him—her personal, her physical indifference gave her the mastery. His teeth clenched and his passion blazed in his eyes as he said: "No—you witch! I'll see it through."

She smiled lightly. "I suppose you'll come to the offices of the company—occasionally?" She drew

nearer, stood at the corner of the desk. Into her exquisite eyes came a look of tenderness. "And I shall be glad to see you."

"You mean that?" he said, despising himself for his humble eagerness, and hating her even as he loved her.

"Indeed I do." She smiled bewitchingly. "You are a lot better man than you think."

"I am an awful fool about you," retorted he. "You see, I play my game with all my cards on the table. I wish I could say the same of you."

"I am not playing a game," replied she. "You make a mystery where there isn't any. And—all your cards aren't on the table." She laughed mockingly. "At least, you think there's one that isn't—though, really, it is."

"Yes?"

"About your engagement."

He covered superbly. "Oh," said he in the most indifferent tone. "Tetlow told you."

"As soon as I heard that," she went on, "I felt better about you. I understand how it is with men—the passing fancies they have for women."

"How did you learn?" demanded he.

"Do you think a girl could spend several years knocking about down town in New York without getting experience?"

He smiled—a forced smile of raillery, hiding sud-

den fierce suspicion and jealousy. "I should say not. But you always pretend innocence."

"I can't be held responsible for what you read into my looks and into what I say," observed she with her air of a wise old infant. "But I was so glad to find out that you were seriously in love with a nice girl up town."

He burst out laughing. She gazed at him in child-like surprise. "Why are you laughing at me?" she asked.

"Nothing—nothing," he assured her. He would have found it difficult to explain why he was so intensely amused at hearing the grand Josephine Burroughs called "a nice girl up town."

"You are in love with her? You are engaged to her?" she inquired, her grave eyes upon him with an irresistible appeal for truth in them.

"Tetlow didn't lie to you," evaded he. "You don't know it, but Tetlow is going to ask you to marry him."

"Yes, I knew," replied she indifferently.

"How? Did he tell you?"

"No. Just as I knew you were not going to ask me to marry you."

The mere phrase, even when stated as a negation, gave him a sensation of ice suddenly laid against the heart.

"It's quite easy to tell the difference between the two kinds of men—those that care for me more than

they care for themselves and those that care for themselves more than they care for me."

"That's the way it looks to you—is it?"

"That's the way it is," said she.

"There are some things you don't understand. This is one of them."

"Maybe I don't," said she. "But I've my own idea—and I'm going to stick to it."

This amused him. "You are a very opinionated and self-confident young lady," said he.

She laughed roguishly. "I'm taking up a lot of your time."

"Don't think of it. You haven't asked when the new deal is to begin."

"Oh, yes—and I shall have to tell Mr. Tetlow I'm not taking the place he got for me."

"Be careful what you say to him," cautioned Norman. "You must see it wouldn't be well to tell him what you are going to do. There's no reason on earth why he should know your business—is there?"

She did not reply; she was reflecting.

"You are not thinking of marrying Tetlow—are you?"

"No," she said. "I don't love him—and couldn't learn to."

With a sincerely judicial air, now that he felt secure, he said: "Why not? It would be a good match."

"I don't love him," she repeated, as if that were a

sufficient and complete answer. And he was astonished to find that he so regarded it, also, in spite of every assault of all that his training had taught him to regard as common sense about human nature.

"You can simply say to Tetlow that you've decided to stay at home and take care of your father. The offices of the company will be at your house. Your official duties practically amount to taking care of your father. So you'll be speaking the truth."

"Oh, it isn't exactly lying, to keep something from somebody who has no right to know it. What you suggest isn't quite the truth. But it's near enough, and I'll say it to him."

His own view of lying was the same as that she had expressed. Also, he had no squeamishness about saying what was in no sense true, if the falsehood were necessary to his purposes. Yet her statement of her code, moral though he thought it and eminently sensible as well, lowered her once more in his estimation. He was eager to find reason or plausible excuse for believing her morally other and less than she seemed to be. Immediately the prospects of his ultimate projects—whatever they might prove to be—took on a more hopeful air. "And I'd advise you to have Tetlow keep away from you. We don't want him nosing round."

"No, indeed," said she. "He is a nice man, but tiresome. And if I encouraged him ever so little, he'd be sentimental. The most tiresome thing in the world

to a girl is a man who talks that sort of thing when she doesn't want to hear it—from him."

He laughed. "Meaning me?" he suggested.

She nodded, much pleased. "Perhaps," she replied.

"Don't worry about that," mocked he.

"I shan't till I have to," she assured him. "And I don't think I'll have to."

On the Monday morning following, Tetlow came in to see Norman as soon as he arrived. "I want a two weeks' leave," he said. "I'm going to Bermuda or down there somewhere."

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Norman. "You do look ill, old man."

"I saw her last night," replied the chief clerk, dropping an effort at concealing his dejection. "She —she turned me down."

"Really? You?" Norman's tone of sympathetic surprise would not have deceived half attentive ears. But Tetlow was securely absorbed. "Why, Billy, she can't hope to make as good a match."

"That's what I told her—when I saw the game was going against me. But it was no use."

Norman trifled nervously with the papers before him. Presently he said, "Is it some one else?"

Tetlow shook his head.

"How do you know?"

"Because she said so," replied the head clerk.

"Oh—if she said so, that settles it," said Norman with raillery.

"She's given up work—thank God," pursued Tetlow. "She's getting more beautiful all the time—Norman, if you had seen her last night, you'd understand why I'm stark mad about her."

Norman's eyes were down. His hands, the muscles of his jaw were clinched.

"But, I mustn't think of that," Tetlow went on. "As I was about to say, if she were to stay on in the offices some one—some attractive man like you, only with the heart of a scoundrel——"

Norman laughed cynically.

"Yes, a scoundrel!" reiterated the fat head-clerk. "Some scoundrel would tempt her beyond her power to resist. Money and clothes and luxury will do anything. We all get to be harlots here in New York. Some of us know it, and some don't. But we all look it and act it. And she'd go the way of the rest—with or without marriage. It's just as well she didn't marry me. I know what'd have become of her."

Norman nodded.

Tetlow gave a weary sigh. "Anyhow, she's safe at home with her father. He's found a backer for his experiments."

"That's good," said Norman.

"You can spare me for ten days," Tetlow went on. "I'd be of no use if I stayed."

There was a depth of misery in his kind gray eyes that moved Norman to get up and lay a friendly hand on his shoulder. "It's the best thing, old man. She wasn't for you."

Tetlow dropped into a chair and sobbed. "It has killed me," he groaned. "I don't mean I'll commit suicide or die. I mean I'm dead inside—dead."

"Oh, come, Billy—where's your good sense?"

"I know what I'm talking about," said he. "Norman, God help the man who meets the woman he really wants—God help him if she doesn't want him. You don't understand. You'll never have the experience. Any woman you wanted would be sure to want you."

Norman, his hand still on Tetlow's shoulder, was staring ahead with a terrible expression upon his strong features.

"If she could see the inside of me—the part that's the real me—I think she would love me—or learn to love me. But she can only see the outside—this homely face and body of mine. It's horrible, Fred—to have a mind and a heart fit for love and for being loved, and an outside that repels it. And how many of us poor devils of that sort there are—men and women both!"

Norman was at the window now, his back to the room, to his friend. After a while Tetlow rose and made a feeble effort to straighten himself. "Is it all right about the vacation?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Norman, without turning.

"Thank you, Fred. You're a good friend."

"I'll see you before you go," said Norman, still facing the window. "You'll come back all right."

Tetlow did not answer. When Norman turned he was alone.

IX

In no way was Norman's luck superior to most men's more splendidly than in that his inborn tendency to arrogant and extravagant desires was matched by an inborn capacity to get the necessary money. His luxurious tastes were certainly not moderated by his associations — enormously rich people who, while they could be stingy enough in some respects, at the same time could and did fling away fortunes in gratifying selfish whims—for silly showy houses, for retinues of wasteful servants, for gewgaws that accentuated the homeliness of their homely women and coarsened and vulgarized their pretty women — or perhaps for a night's gambling or entertaining, or for the forced smiles and contemptuous caresses of some belle of the other world. Norman fortunately cared not at all for the hugely expensive pomp of the life of the rich; if he had, he would have hopelessly involved himself, as after all he was not a money-grubber but a lawyer. But when there appeared anything for which he did care, he was ready to bid for it like the richest of the rich.

Therefore the investment of a few thousand dollars seemed a small matter to him. He had many a time

tossed away far more for far less. He did not dole out the sum he had agreed to provide. He paid it into the Jersey City bank to the credit of the Chemical Research Company and informed its secretary and treasurer that she could draw freely against it. "If you will read the by-laws of the company," said he, "you will see that you've the right to spend exactly as you see fit. When the money runs low, let me know."

"I'll be very careful," said Dorothea Hallowell, secretary and treasurer.

"That's precisely what we don't want," replied he. He glanced round the tiny parlor of the cottage. "We want everything to be run in first-class shape. That's the only way to get results. First of all, you must take a proper house—a good-sized one, with large grounds—room for building your father a proper laboratory."

Her dazed and dazzled expression delighted him.

"And you must live better. You must keep at least two servants."

"But we can't afford it."

"Your father has five thousand a year. You have fifteen hundred. That makes sixty-five hundred. The rent of the house and the wages and keep of the servants are a charge against the corporation. So, you can well afford to make yourselves comfortable."

"I haven't got used to the idea as yet," said Dorothea. "Yes—we *are* better off than we were."

"And you must live better. I want you to get some clothes—and things of that sort."

She shrank within herself and sat quiet, her gaze fixed upon her hands lying limp in her lap.

"There is no reason why your father shouldn't be made absolutely comfortable and happy. That's the way to get the best results from a man of his sort."

She faded on toward the self-effacing blank he had first known.

"Think it out, Dorothy," he said in his frankest, kindliest way. "You'll see I'm right."

"No," she said.

"No? What does that mean?"

"I've an instinct against it," replied she. "I'd rather father and I kept on as we are."

"But that's impossible. You've no right to live in this small, cramping way. You must broaden out and give *him* room to grow. . . . Isn't that sensible?"

"It sounds so," she admitted. "But—" She gazed round helplessly—"I'm afraid!"

"Afraid of what?"

"I don't know."

"Then don't bother about it."

"I'll have to be very—careful," she said thoughtfully.

"As you please," replied he. "Only, don't live and think on a ten-dollar-a-week basis. That isn't the way to get on."

He never again brought up the matter in direct form. But most of his conversation was indirect and more or less subtle suggestions as to ways of branching out. She moved cautiously for a few days, then timidly began to spend money.

There is a notion widely spread abroad that people who have little money know more about the art of spending money and the science of economizing than those who have much. It would be about as sensible to say that the best swimmers are those who have never been near the water, or no nearer than a bath tub. Anyone wishing to be convinced need only make an excursion into the poor tenement district and observe the garbage barrels overflowing with spoiled food—or the trashy goods exposed for sale in the shops and the markets. Those who have had money and have lost it are probably, as a rule, the wisest in thrift. Those who have never had money are almost invariably prodigal—because they are ignorant. When Dorothea Hallowell was a baby the family had had money. But never since she could remember had they been anything but poor.

She did not know how to spend money. She did not know prices or values—being in that respect precisely like the mass of mankind—and womankind—who imagine they are economical because they hunt so-called bargains and haggle with merchants who have got doubly ready for them by laying in inferior goods and by putting up prices in advance. She knew how much

ten dollars a week was, the meaning of the twenty to thirty dollars a week her father had made. But she had only a faint—and exaggeratedly mistaken—notion about sixty-five hundred a year—six and a half thousands. It seemed wealth to her, so vast that a hundred thousand a year would have seemed no more. As soon as she drifted away from the known course—the thirty to forty dollars a week upon which they had been living—Dorothea Hallowell was in a trackless sea, with a broken compass and no chart whatever. A common enough experience in America, the land of sudden changes of fortune, of rosiest hopes about "striking it rich," of carelessness and ignorance as to values, of eager and untrained appetite for luxury and novelty of any and every kind.

At first any expenditure, however small, for the plainest comfort which had been beyond their means seemed a giddy extravagance. But a bank account—*and* a check book—soon dissipated that nervousness. A few charge accounts, a little practice in the simple easy gesture of drawing a check, and she was almost at her ease. With people who have known only squalor or with those who have earned their better fortune by privation and slow accumulation, the spreading out process is usually slow—not so slow as it used to be when our merchants had not learned the art of tempting any and every kind of human nature, but still far from rapid. A piece of money reminds them vividly and

painfully of the toil put into acquiring it; and they shy away from the pitfall of the facile check. With those born and bred as Dorothy was and elevated into what seems to them affluence by no effort of their own, the spreading is a tropical, overnight affair.

Counting all she spent and arranged to spend in those first few weeks, you had no great total. But it was great for a girl who had been making ten dollars a week. Also there were sown in her mind broadcast and thick the seeds of desire for more luxurious comfort, of need for it, that could never be uprooted.

Norman came over almost every evening. He got a new and youthful and youth-restoring kind of pleasure out of this process of expansion. He liked to hear each trifling detail, and he was always making suggestions that bore immediate fruit in further expenditure. When he again brought up the subject of a larger house, she listened with only the faintest protests. Her ideas of such a short time before seemed small, laughably small now. "Father was worrying only this morning because he is so cramped," she admitted.

"We must remedy that at once," said Norman.

And on the following Sunday he and she went house hunting. They found a satisfactory place—peculiarly satisfactory to Norman because it was near the Hudson tunnel, and so only a few minutes from his office. To Dorothy it loomed a mansion, almost a palace. In fact it was a modestly roomy old-fashioned brick house, with

a brick stable at the side that, with a little changing, would make an admirable laboratory.

"You haven't the time—or the experience—to fit this place up," said Norman. "I'll attend to it—that is, I'll have it attended to." Seeing her uneasy expression, he added: "I can get much better terms. They'd certainly overcharge you. There's no sense in wasting money—is there?"

"No," she admitted, convinced.

He gave the order to a firm of decorators. It was a moderate order, considering the amount of work that had to be done. But if the girl had seen the estimates Norman indorsed, she would have been terrified. However, he saw to it that she did not see them; and she, ignorant of values, believed him when he told her the general account of the corporation must be charged with two thousand dollars.

Her alarm took him by surprise. The sum seemed small to him—and it was only about one fifth what the alterations and improvements had cost. Cried she, "Why, that's more than our whole income for a year has been!"

"You are forgetting these improvements add to the value of the property. I've bought it."

That quieted her. "You are sure you didn't pay those decorators and furnishers too much?" said she.

"You don't like their work?" inquired he, chagrined.

"Oh, yes—yes, indeed," she assured him. "I like plain, solid-looking things. But—two thousand dollars is a lot of money."

Norman regretted that, as his whole object had been to please her, he had not ordered the more showy cheaper stuff but had insisted upon the simplest, plainest-looking appointments throughout. Even her bedroom furniture, even her dressing table set, was of the kind that suggests cost only to the experienced, carefully and well educated in values and in taste.

"But I'm sure it isn't fair to charge *all* these things to the company," she protested. "I can't allow it. Not the things for my personal use."

"You *are* a fierce watchdog of a treasurer," said Norman, laughing at her but noting and respecting the fine instinct of good breeding shown in her absence of greediness, of desire to get all she could. "But I'm letting the firm of decorators take over what you leave behind in the old house. I'll see what they'll allow for it. Maybe that will cover the expense you object to."

This contented her. Nor was she in the least suspicious when he announced that the decorators had made such a liberal allowance that the deficit was but three hundred dollars. "Those chaps," he explained, "have a wide margin of profit. Besides, they're eager to get more and bigger work from me."

A few weeks, and he was enjoying the sight of her ensconced with her father in luxurious comfort—with

two servants, with a well-run house, with pleasant gardens, with all that is at the command of an income of six thousand a year in a comparatively inexpensive city. Only occasionally—and then not deeply—was he troubled by the reflection that he was still far from his goal —and had made apparently absurdly little progress toward it through all this maneuvering. The truth was, he preferred to linger when lingering gave him so many new kinds of pleasure. Of those in the large and motley company that sit down to the banquet of the senses, the most are crude, if not coarse, gluttons. They eat fast and furiously, having a raw appetite. Now and then there is one who has some idea of the art of enjoyment—the art of prolonging and varying both the joys of anticipation and the joys of realization.

He turned his attention to tempting her to extravagance in dress. But his success there was not all he could have wished. She wore better clothes—much better. She no longer looked the poor working girl, struggling desperately to be neat and clean. She had almost immediately taken on the air of the comfortable classes. But everything she got for herself was inexpensive. And she made dresses for herself, and trimmed all her hats. With the hats Norman found no fault. There her good taste produced about as satisfactory results as could have been got at the fashionable milliners—more satisfactory than are got by the women who go there, with no taste of their own beyond a hazy idea that they

want "something like what Mrs. So-and-So is wearing." But homemade dresses were a different matter.

Norman longed to have her in toilettes that would bring out the full beauty of her marvelous figure. He, after the manner of the more intelligent and worldly-wise New York men, had some knowledge of women's clothes. His sister knew how to dress; Josephine knew how, though her taste was somewhat too sober to suit Norman—at least to suit him in Dorothy. He thought out and suggested dresses to Dorothy, and told her where to get them. Dorothy tried to carry out at home such of his suggestions as pleased her—for, like all women, she believed she knew how to dress herself. Her handiwork was creditable. It would have contented a less exacting and less trained taste than Norman's. It would have contented him had he not been infatuated with her beauty of face and form. As it was, the improvement in her appearance only served to intensify his agitation. He now saw in her not only all that had first conquered him, but also those unsuspected beauties and graces—and possibilities of beauty and grace yet more entrancing, were she but dressed properly.

"You don't begin to appreciate how beautiful you are," said he. It had ever been one of his rules in dealing with women to feed their physical vanity sparingly and cautiously, lest it should blaze up into one of those consuming flames that produce a very frenzy of

conceit. But this rule, like all the others, had gone by the board. He could not conceal his infatuation from her, not even when he saw that it was turning her head and making his task harder and harder. "If you would only go over to New York to several dressmakers whose names I'll give you, I know you'd get clothes from them that you could touch up into something uncommon."

"I can't afford it," said she. "What I have is good enough—and costs more than I've the right to pay." And her tone silenced him; it was the tone of finality, and he had discovered that she had a will.

Never before had Frederick Norman let any important thing drift. And when he started in with Dorothy he had no idea of changing that fixed policy. He would have scoffed if anyone had foretold to him that he would permit the days and the weeks to go by with nothing definite accomplished toward any definite purpose. Yet that was what occurred. Every time he came he had in mind a fixed resolve to make distinct progress with the girl. Every time he left he had a furious quarrel with himself for his weakness. "She is making a fool of me," he said to himself. "She *must* be laughing at me." But he returned only to repeat his folly, to add one more to the lengthening, mocking series of lost opportunities.

The truth lay deeper than he saw. He recognized

only his own weakness of the infatuated lover's fatuous timidity. He did not realize how potent her charm for him was, how completely content she made him when he was with her, just from the fact that they were together. After a time an unsatisfied passion often thus diffuses itself, ceases to be a narrow torrent, becomes a broad river whose resistless force is hidden beneath an appearance of sparkling calm. Her ingenuousness amused him; her developing taste and imagination interested him; her freshness, her freedom from any sense of his importance in the world fascinated him, and there was a keener pleasure than he dreamed in the novel sensation of breathing the perfume of what he, the one time cynic, would have staked his life on being unsullied purity. Their relations were to him a delightful variation upon the intimacy of master and pupil. Either he was listening to her or was answering her questions —and the time flew. And there never was a moment when he could have introduced the subject that most concerned him when he was not with her. To have introduced it would have been rudely to break the charm of a happy afternoon or evening.

Was she leading him on and on nowhere deliberately? Or was it the sweet and innocent simplicity it seemed? He could not tell. He would have broken the charm and put the matter to the test had he not been afraid of the consequences. What had he to fear? Was she not in his power? Was she not his, whenever he should

stretch forth his hand and claim her? Yes—no doubt —not the slightest doubt. But— He was afraid to break the charm; it was such a satisfying charm.

Then—there was her father.

Men who arrive anywhere in any direction always have the habit of ignoring the nonessential more or less strongly developed. One reason — perhaps the chief reason—why Norman had got up to the high places of material success at so early an age was that he had an unerring instinct for the essential and wasted no time or energy upon the nonessential. In his present situation Dorothy's father, the abstracted man of science, was one of the factors that obviously fell into the nonessential class. Norman knew little about him, and cared less. Also, he took care to avoid knowing him. Knowing the father would open up possibilities of discomfort— But, being a wise young man, Norman gave this matter the least possible thought.

Still, it was necessary that the two men see something of each other. Hallowell discovered nothing about Norman, not enough about his personal appearance to have recognized him in the street far enough away from the laboratory to dissociate the two ideas. Human beings—except his daughter—did not interest Hallowell; and his feeling for her was somewhat in the nature of an abstraction. Norman, on the other hand, was intensely interested in human beings; indeed, he was interested in little else. He was always thrusting

through surfaces, probing into minds and souls. He sought thoroughly to understand the living machines he used in furthering his ambitions and desires. So it was not long before he learned much about old Newton Hallowell—and began to admire him—and with a man of Norman's temperament to admire is to like.

He had assumed at the outset that the scientist was more or less the crank. He had not talked with him many times before he discovered that, far from being in any respect a crank, he was a most able and well-balanced mentality—a genius. The day came when, Dorothy not having returned from a shopping tour, he lingered in the laboratory talking with the father, or, rather, listening while the man of great ideas unfolded to him conceptions of the world that set his imagination to soaring.

Most of us see but dimly beyond the ends of our noses, and visualize what lies within our range of sight most imperfectly. We know little about ourselves, less about others. We fancy that the world and the human race always have been about as they now are, and always will be. History reads to us like a fairy tale, to which we give conventional acceptance as truth. As to the future, we can conceive nothing but the continuation of just what we see about us in the present. Norman, practical man though he was, living in and for the present, had yet an imagination. He thought Hallowell a kind of fool for thinking only of the future and

working only for it—but he soon came to think him a divine fool. And through Hallowell's spectacles he was charmed for many an hour with visions of the world that is to be when, in the slow but steady processes of evolution, the human race will become intelligent, will conquer the universe with the weapons of science and will make it over.

When he first stated his projects to Norman, the young man had difficulty in restraining his amusement. A new idea, in any line of thought with which we are not familiar, always strikes us as ridiculous. Norman had been educated in the ignorant conventional way still in high repute among the vulgar and among those whose chief delight is to make the vulgar gape in awe. He therefore had no science, that is, no knowledge—outside his profession—but only what is called learning, though tommyrot would be a fitter name for it. He had only the most meager acquaintance with that great fundamental of a sound and sane education, embryology. He knew nothing of what science had already done to destroy all the still current notions about the mystery of life and birth. He still laughed, as at a clever bit of legerdemain, when Hallowell showed him how far science had progressed toward mastery of the life of the lower forms of existence—how those "worms" could be artificially created, could be aged, made young again, made diseased and decrepit, restored to perfect health, could be swung back and forth or sideways or sinuously

along the span of existence—could even be killed and brought back to vigor.

"We've been at this sort of thing only a few years," said Hallowell. "I rather think it will not be many years now before we shall not even need the initial germ of life to enable us to create but can do it by pure chemical means, just as a taper is lighted by holding a match to it."

Norman ceased to think of sleight-of-hand.

"Life," continued the juggler, transformed now into practical man, leader of men, "life has been demonstrated to be simply one of the forms of energy, or one of the consequences of energy. The final discovery is scientifically not far away. Then—" His eyes lighted up.

"Then what?" asked Norman.

"Then immortality—in the body. Eternal youth and health. A body that is renewable much as any of our inanimate machines of the factory is renewable. Why not? So far as we know, no living thing ever dies except by violence. Disease—old age—they are quite as much violence as the knife and the bullet. What science can now do with these 'worms,' as my daughter calls them—that it will be able to do with the higher organisms."

"And the world would soon be jammed to the last acre," objected Norman.

Hallowell shrugged his shoulders. "Not at all.

There will be no necessity to create new people, except to take the place of those who may be accidentally obliterated."

"But the world is dying—the earth, itself, I mean."

"True. But science may learn how to arrest that cooling process—or to adapt man to it. Or, it may be that when the world ceases to be inhabitable we shall have learned how to cross the star spaces, as I think I've suggested before. Then—we should simply find a planet in its youth somewhere, and migrate to it, as a man now moves to a new house when the old ceases to please him."

"That is a long flight of the fancy," said Norman.

"Long—but no stronger than the telegraph or the telephone. The trouble with us is that we have been long stupefied by the ignorant theological ideas of the universe—ideas that have come down to us from the childhood of the race. We haven't got used to the new era—the scientific era. And that is natural. Why, until less than three generations ago there was really no such thing as science."

"I hadn't thought of that," admitted Norman. "We certainly have got on very fast in those three generations."

"Rather fast. Not so fast, however, as we shall in the next three. Science—chemistry—is going speedily to change all the conditions of life because it will turn topsy-turvy all the ways of producing things—food,

clothing, shelter. Less than two generations ago men lived much as they had for thousands of years. But it's very different to-day. It will be inconceivably different to-morrow."

Norman could not get these ideas out of his brain. He began to understand why Hallowell cared nothing about the active life of the day—about its religion, politics, modes of labor, its habits of one creature preying upon another. To-morrow, not religion, not politics, but chemistry, not priests nor politicians, but chemists, would change all that—and change it by the only methods that compel. An abstract idea of liberty or justice can be rejected, evaded, nullified. But a telephone, a steam engine, a mode of prolonging life—those realizations of ideas *compel.*

When Dorothy came, Norman went into the garden with her in a frame of mind so different from any he had ever before experienced that he scarcely recognized himself. As the influence of the father's glowing imagination of genius waned before the daughter's physical loveliness and enchantment for him, he said to himself, "I'll keep away from him." Why? He did not permit himself to go on to examine into his reasons. But he could not conceal them from himself quickly enough to hide the knowledge that they were moral.

"What is the matter with you to-day?" said Dorothy. "You are not a bit interesting."

"Interested, you mean," he said with a smile of

raillery, for he had long since discovered that she was not without the feminine vanity that commands the centering of all interest in the woman herself and resents any wandering of thought as a slur upon her own powers of fascination.

"Well, interested then," said she. "You are thinking about something else."

"Not now," he assured her.

But he left early. No sooner had he got away from the house than the scientific dreaming vanished and he wished himself back with her again—back where every glance at her gave him the most exquisite sensations. And when he came the following day he apparently had once more restored her father to his proper place of a nonessential. All that definitely remained of the day before's impression was a certain satisfaction that he was aiding with his money an enterprise of greater value and of less questionable character than merely his own project. But the powerful influences upon our life and conduct are rarely direct and definite. He, quite unconsciously, had a wholly different feeling about Dorothy because of her father, because of what his new knowledge of and respect for her father had revealed and would continue to reveal to him as to the girl herself—her training, her inheritance, her character that could not but be touched with the splendor of the father's noble genius. And long afterward, when the father as a distinct personality had been almost forgotten, Nor-

man was still, altogether unconsciously, influenced by him—powerfully, perhaps decisively influenced. Norman had no notion of it, but ever after that talk in the laboratory, Dorothy Hallowell was to him Newton Hallowell's daughter.

When he came the following day, with his original purposes and plans once more intact, as he thought, he found that she had made more of a toilet than usual, had devised a new way of doing her hair that enabled him to hang a highly prized addition in his memory gallery of widely varied portraits of her.

The afternoon was warm. They sat under a big old tree at the end of the garden. He saw that she was much disturbed—and that it had to do with him. From time to time she looked at him, studying his face when she thought herself unobserved. As he had learned that it is never wise to open up the disagreeable, he waited. After making several futile efforts at conversation, she abruptly said:

"I saw Mr. Tetlow this morning—in Twenty-third Street. I was coming out of a chemical supplies store where father had sent me."

She paused. But Norman did not help her. He continued to wait.

"He—Mr. Tetlow—acted very strangely," she went on. "I spoke to him. He stared at me as if he weren't going to speak—as if I weren't fit to speak to."

"Oh!" said Norman.

"Then he came hurrying after me. And he said, 'Do you know that Norman is to be married in two weeks?'"

"So!" said Norman.

"And I said, 'What of it? How does that interest me?'"

"It didn't interest you?"

"I was surprised that you hadn't spoken of it," replied she. "But I was more interested in Mr. Tetlow's manner. What do you think he said next?"

"I can't imagine," said Norman.

"Why—that I was even more shameless than he thought. He said: 'Oh, I know all about you. I found out by accident. I shan't tell anyone, for I can't help loving you still. But it has killed my belief in woman to find out that *you* would sell yourself.'"

She was looking at Norman with eyes large and grave. "And what did you say?" he inquired.

"I didn't say anything. I looked at him as if he weren't there and started on. Then he said, 'When Norman abandons you, as he soon will, you can count on me, if you need a friend.'"

There was a pause. Then Norman said, "And that was all?"

"Yes," replied she.

Another pause. Norman said musingly: "Poor Tetlow! I've not seen him since he went away to Bermuda—at least he said he was going there. One

day he sent the firm a formal letter of resignation. . . . Poor Tetlow! Do you regret not having married him?"

"I couldn't marry a man I didn't love." She looked at him with sweet friendly eyes. "I couldn't even marry you, much as I like you."

Norman laughed—a dismal attempt at ease and raillery.

"When he told me about your marrying," she went on, "I knew how I felt about you. For I was not a bit jealous. Why haven't you ever said anything about it?"

He disregarded this. He leaned forward and with curious deliberateness took her hand. She let it lie gently in his. He put his arm round her and drew her close to him. She did not resist. He kissed her upturned face, kissed her upon the lips. She remained passive, looking at him with calm eyes.

"Kiss me," he said.

She kissed him — without hesitation and without warmth.

"Why do you look at me so?" he demanded.

"I can't understand."

"Understand what?"

"Why you should wish to kiss me when you love another woman. What would she say if she knew?"

"I'm sure I don't know. And I rather think I don't care. You are the only person on earth that interests me."

"Then why are you marrying?"

"Let's not talk about that. Let's talk about ourselves." He clasped her passionately, kissed her at first with self-restraint, then in a kind of frenzy. "How can you be so cruel!" he cried. "Are you utterly cold?"

"I do not love you," she said.

"Why not?"

"There's no reason. I—just don't. I've sometimes thought perhaps it was because you don't love me."

"Good God, Dorothy! What do you want me to say or do?"

"Nothing," replied she calmly. "You asked me why I didn't love you, and I was trying to explain. I don't want anything more than I'm getting. I am content—aren't you?"

"Content!" He laughed sardonically. "As well ask Tantalus if he is content, with the water always before his eyes and always out of reach. I want you —all you have to give. I couldn't be content with less."

"You ought not to talk to me this way," she reproved gently, "when you are engaged."

He flung her hand into her lap. "You are making a fool of me. And I don't wonder. I've invited it. Surely, never since man was created has there been such another ass as I." He drew her to her feet, seized her roughly by the shoulders. "When are you coming to your senses?" he demanded.

"What do you mean?" she inquired, in her child-like puzzled way.

He shook her, kissed her violently, held her at arm's length. "Do you think it wise to trifle with me?" he asked. "Don't your good sense tell you there's a limit even to such folly as mine?"

"What *is* the matter?" she asked pathetically. "What do you want? I can't give you what I haven't got to give."

"No," he cried. "But I want what you *have* got to give."

She shook her head slowly. "Really, I haven't, Mr. Norman."

He eyed her with cynical amused suspicion. "Why did you call me *Mr.* Norman just then? Usually you don't call me at all. It's been weeks since you have called me Mister. Was your doing it just then one of those subtle, adroit, timely tricks of yours?"

She was the picture of puzzled innocence. "I don't understand," she said.

"Well—perhaps you don't," said he doubtfully. "At any rate, don't call me Mr. Norman. Call me Fred."

"I can't. It isn't natural. You seem Mister to me. I always think of you as Mr. Norman."

"That's it. And it must stop!"

She smiled with innocent gayety. "Very well—Fred. . . . Fred. . . . Now that I've said it, I don't find

it strange." She looked at him with an expression between appeal and mockery. "If you'd only let me get acquainted with you. But you don't. You make me feel that I've got to be careful with you—that I must be on my guard. I don't know against what—for you are certainly the very best friend that I've ever had—the only real friend."

He frowned and bit his lip—and felt uncomfortable, though he protested to himself that he was simply irritated at her slyness. Yes, it must be slyness.

"So," she went on, "there's no *reason* for being on guard. Still, I feel that way." She looked at him with sweet gravity. "Perhaps I shouldn't if you didn't talk about love to me and kiss me in a way I feel you've no right to."

Again he laid his hands upon her shoulders. This time he gazed angrily into her eyes. "Are you a fool? Or are you making a fool of me?" he said. "I can't decide which."

"I certainly am very foolish," was her apologetic answer. "I don't know a lot of things, like you and father. I'm only a girl."

And he had the maddening sense of being baffled again—of having got nowhere, of having demonstrated afresh to himself and to her his own weakness where she was concerned. What unbelievable weakness! Had there ever been such another case? Yes, there must have been. How little he had known of the possibil-

ities of the relations of men and women—he who had prided himself on knowing all!

She said, "You are going to marry?"

"I suppose so," replied he sourly.

"Are you worried about the expense? Is it costing you too much, this helping father? Are you sorry you went into it?"

He was silent.

"You are sorry?" she exclaimed. "You feel that you are wasting your money?"

His generosity forbade him to keep up the pretense that might aid him in his project. "No," he said hastily. "No, indeed. This expense—it's nothing." He flushed, hung his head in shame before his own weakness, as he added, in complete surrender, "I'm very glad to be helping your father."

"I knew you would be!" she cried triumphantly. "I knew it!" And she flung her arms round his neck and kissed him.

"That's better!" he said with a foolishly delighted laugh. "I believe we are beginning to get acquainted."

"Yes, indeed. I feel quite different already."

"I hoped so. You are coming to your senses?"

"Perhaps. Only—" She laid a beautiful white pleading hand upon his shoulder and gazed earnestly into his eyes—"please don't frighten me with that talk—and those other kisses."

He looked at her uncertainly. "Come round in

your own way," he said at last. "I don't want to hurry you. I suppose every bird has its own way of dropping from a perch."

"You don't like my way?" she inquired.

It was said archly but also in the way that always made him vaguely uneasy, made him feel like one facing a mystery which should be explored cautiously. "It is graceful," he admitted, with a smile since he could not venture to frown. "Graceful—but slow."

She laughed—and he could not but feel that the greater laughter in her too innocent eyes was directed at him. She talked of other things—and he let her—charmed, yet cursing his folly, his slavery, the while.

X

Many a time he had pitied a woman for letting him get away from her, when she obviously wished to hold him and failed solely because she did not understand her business. Like every other man, he no sooner began to be attracted by a woman than he began to invest her with a mystery and awe which she either could dissipate by forcing him to see the truth of her commonplaceness or could increase into a power that would enslave him by keeping him agitated and interested and ever satisfied yet ever baffled. But no woman had shown this supreme skill in the art of love—until Dorothy Hallowell. She exasperated him. She fascinated him. She kept him so restless that his professional work was all but neglected. Was it her skill? Was it her folly? Was she simply leading him on and on, guided blindly by woman's instinct to get as much as she could and to give as little as she dared? Or was she protected by a real indifference to him—the strongest, indeed the only invulnerable armor a woman can wear? Was she protecting herself? Or was it merely that he, weakened by his infatuation, was doing the protecting for her?

Beside these distracting questions, the once all-important matter of professional and worldly ambition seemed not worth troubling about. They even so vexed him that he had become profoundly indifferent as to Josephine. He saw her rarely. When they were alone he either talked neutral subjects or sat almost mute, hardly conscious of her presence. He received her efforts at the customary caressings with such stolidity that she soon ceased to annoy him. They reduced their outward show of affection to a kiss when they met, another when they separated. He was tired—always tired—worn out—half sick—harassed by business concerns. He did not trouble himself about whether his listless excuses would be accepted or not. He did not care what she thought—or might think—or might do.

Josephine was typical of the women of the comfortable class. For them the fundamentally vital matters of life—the profoundly harassing questions of food, clothing, and shelter—are arranged and settled. What is there left to occupy their minds? Little but the idle emotions they manufacture and spread foglike over their true natures to hide the barrenness, the monotony. They fool with phrases about art or love or religion or charity—for none of those things can be vivid realities to those who are swathed and stupefied in a luxury they have not to take the least thought to provide for themselves. Like all those women, Josephine fancied herself complex—fancied she was a person of variety

and of depth because she repeated with a slight change of wording the things she read in clever books or heard from clever men. There seemed to Norman to be small enough originality, personality, to the ordinary man of the comfortable class; but there was some, because his necessity of struggling with and against his fellow men in the several arenas of active life compelled him to be at least a little of a person. In the women there seemed nothing at all—not even in Josephine. When he listened to her, when he thought of her, now—he was calmly critical. He judged her as a human specimen—judged much as would have old Newton Hallowell to whom the whole world was mere laboratory.

She bored him now—and he made no effort beyond bare politeness to conceal the fact from her. The situation was saved from becoming intolerable by that universal saver of intolerable situations, vanity. She had the ordinary human vanity. In addition, she had the peculiar vanity of woman, the creation of man's flatteries lavished upon the sex he alternately serves and spurns. In further addition, she had the vanity of her class—the comfortable class that feels superior to the mass of mankind in fortune, in intellect, in taste, in everything desirable. Heaped upon all these vanities was her vanity of high social rank—and atop the whole her vanity of great wealth. None but the sweetest and simplest of human beings can stand up and remain human under such a weight as this. If we are at all

fair in our judgments of our fellow men, we marvel that the triumphant class—especially the women, whose point of view is never corrected by the experiences of practical life—are not more arrogant, more absurdly forgetful of the oneness and the feebleness of humanity.

Josephine was by nature one of the sweet and simple souls. And her love for Norman, after the habit of genuine love, had destroyed all the instinct of coquetry. The woman—or, the man—has to be indeed interesting, indeed an individuality, to remain interesting when sincerely in love, and so elevated above the petty but potent sex trickeries. Josephine, deeply in love, was showing herself to Norman in her undisguised natural sweet simplicity—and monotony. But, while men admire and reverence a sweet and simple feminine soul—and love her in plays and between the covers of a book and when she is talking highfaluting abstractions of morality—and wax wroth with any other man who ignores or neglects her—they do not in their own persons become infatuated with her. Passion is too much given to moods for that; it has a morbid craving for variety, for the mysterious and the baffling.

The only thing that saves the race from ruin through passion is the rarity of those by nature or by art expert in using it. Norman felt that he was paying the penalty for his persistent search for this rarity; one of the basest tricks of destiny upon man is to give him what he wants—wealth, or fame, or power, or the wom-

an who enslaves. Norman felt that destiny had suddenly revealed its resolve to destroy him by giving him not one of the things he wanted, but all.

The marriage was not quite two weeks away. About the time that the ordinary plausible excuses for Norman's neglect, his abstraction, his seeming indifference were exhausted, Josephine's vanity came forward to explain everything to her, all to her own glory. As the elysian hour approached—so vanity assured her—the man who loved her as her complex soul and many physical and social advantages deserved was overcome with that shy terror of which she had read in the poets and the novelists. A large income, fashionable attire and surroundings, a carriage and a maid—these things gave a woman a subtle and superior intellect and soul. How? Why? No one knew. But everyone admitted, indeed saw, the truth. Further, these beings—these great ladies—according to all the accredited poets, novelists, and other final authorities upon life—always inspired the most awed and worshipful and diffident feelings in their lovers. Therefore, she—the great lady—was getting but her due. She would have liked something else —something common and human—much better. But, having always led her life as the conventions dictated, never as the common human heart yearned, she had no keen sense of dissatisfaction to rouse her to revolt and to question. Also, she was breathlessly busy with trousseau and the other arrangements for the grand wedding.

One afternoon she telephoned Norman asking him to come on his way home that evening. "I particularly wish to see you," she said. He thought her voice sounded rather queer, but he did not take sufficient interest to speculate about it. When he was with her in the small drawing room on the second floor, he noted that her eyes were regarding him strangely. He thought he understood why when she said:

"Aren't you going to kiss me, Fred?"

He put on his good-natured, slightly mocking smile. "I thought you were too busy for that sort of thing nowadays." And he bent and kissed her waiting lips. Then he lit a cigarette and seated himself on the sofa beside her—the sofa at right angles to the open fire. "Well?" he said.

She gazed into the fire for full a minute before she said in a voice of constraint, "What became of that—that girl—the Miss Hallowell——"

She broke off abruptly. There was a pause choked with those dizzy pulsations that fill moments of silence and strain. Then with a sob she flung herself against his breast and buried her face in his shoulder. "Don't answer!" she cried. "I'm ashamed of myself. I'm ashamed—ashamed!"

He put his arm about her shoulders. "But why shouldn't I answer?" said he in the kindly gentle tone we can all assume when a matter that agitates some one else is wholly indifferent to us.

"Because—it was a—a trap," she answered hysterically. "Fred—there was a man here this afternoon —a man named Tetlow. He got in only because he said he came from you."

Norman laughed quietly. "Poor Tetlow!" he said.

"He used to be your head clerk—didn't he?"

"And one of my few friends."

"He's not your friend, Fred!" she cried, sitting upright and speaking with energy that quivered in her voice and flashed in her fine brown eyes. "He's your enemy — a snake in the grass — a malicious, poisonous——"

Norman's quiet, even laugh interrupted. "Oh, no," said he. "Tetlow's a good fellow. Anything he said would be what he honestly believed—anything he said about me."

"He pleaded that he was doing it for your good," she went on with scorn. "They always do—like the people that write father wicked anonymous letters. He —this man Tetlow—he said he wanted me for the sake of my love for you to save you from yourself."

Norman glanced at her with amused eyes. "Well, why don't you? But then you *are* doing it. You're marrying me, aren't you?"

Again she put her head upon his shoulder. "Indeed I am!" she cried. "And I'd be a poor sort if I let a sneak shake my confidence in you."

He patted her shoulder, and there was laughter in

his voice as he said, "But I never professed to be trustworthy."

"Oh, I know you *used* to—" She laughed and kissed his cheek. "Never mind. I've heard. But while you were engaged to me—about to marry me—why, you simply couldn't!"

"Couldn't what?" inquired he.

"Do you want me to tell you what he said?"

"I think I know. But do as you like."

"Maybe I'd better tell you. I seem to want to get rid of it."

"Then do."

"It was about that girl." She sat upright and looked at him for encouragement. He nodded. She went on: "He said that if I asked you, you would not dare deny you were—were—giving her money."

"Her and her father."

She shrank, startled. Then her lips smiled bravely, and she said, "He didn't say anything about her father."

"No. That was my own correction of his story."

She looked at him with wonder and doubt. "You aren't—*doing* it, Fred!" she exclaimed.

He nodded. "Yes, indeed." He looked at her placidly. "Why not?"

"You are *supporting* her?"

"If you wish to put it that way," said he carelessly. "My money pays the bills—all the bills."

"Fred!"

"Yes? What is it? Why are you so agitated?" He studied her face, then rose, took a final pull at the cigarette, tossed it in the fire. "I must be going," he said, in a cool, even voice.

She started up in a panic. "Fred! What do you mean? Are you angry with me?"

His calm regard met hers. "I do not like—this sort of thing," he said.

"But surely you'll explain. Surely I'm entitled to an explanation."

"Why should *I* explain? You have evidently found an explanation that satisfies you." He drew himself up in a quiet gesture of haughtiness. "Besides, it has never been my habit to allow myself to be questioned or to explain myself."

Her eyes widened with terror. "Fred!" she gasped. "What *do* you mean?"

"Precisely what I say," said he, in the same cool, inevitable way. "A man came to you with a story about me. You listened. A sufficient answer to the story was that I am marrying you. That answer apparently does not content you. Very well. I shall make no other."

She gazed at him uncertainly. She felt him going—and going finally. She seized him with desperate fingers, cried: "I *am* content. Oh, Fred—don't frighten me this way!"

He smiled satirically. "Are you afraid of the scandal—because everything for the wedding has gone so far?"

"How can you think that!" cried she—perhaps too vigorously, a woman would have thought.

"What else is there for me to think? You certainly haven't shown any consideration for me."

"But you told me yourself that you were false to me."

"Really? When?"

She forgot her fear in a gush of rage rising from sudden realization of what she was doing—of how leniently and weakly and without pride she was dealing with this man. "Didn't you admit——"

"Pardon me," said he, and his manner might well have calmed the wildest tempest of anger. "I did not admit. I never admit. I leave that to people of the sort who explain and excuse and apologize. I simply told you I was paying the expenses of a family named Hallowell."

"But *why* should you do it, Fred?"

His smile was gently satirical. "I thought Tetlow told you why."

"I don't believe him!"

"Then why this excitement?"

One could understand how the opposition witnesses dreaded facing him. "I don't know just why," she stammered. "It seemed to me you were admitting—

I mean, you were confirming what that man accused you of."

"And of what did he accuse me? I might say, of what do *you* accuse me?" When she remained silent he went on: "I am trying to be reasonable, Josephine. I am trying to keep my temper."

The look in her eyes—the fear, the timidity—was a startling revelation of character—of the cowardice with which love undermines the strongest nature. "I know I've been foolish and incoherent, Fred," she pleaded. "But—I love you! And you remember how I always was afraid of that girl."

"Just what do you wish to know?"

"Nothing, dear—nothing. I am not sillily jealous. I ought to be admiring you for your generosity—your charity."

"It's neither the one nor the other," said he with exasperating deliberateness.

She quivered. "Then *what* is it?" she cried. "You are driving me crazy with your evasions." Pleadingly, "You must admit they *are* evasions."

He buttoned his coat in tranquil preparation to depart. She instantly took alarm. "I don't mean that. It's my fault, not asking you straight out. Fred, tell me—won't you? But if you are too cross with me, then—don't tell me." She laughed nervously, hiding her submission beneath a seeming of mocking exaggeration of humility. "I'll be good. I'll behave."

A man who admired her as a figure, a man who liked her, a man who had no feeling for her beyond the general human feeling of wishing well pretty nearly everybody—in brief, any man but one who had loved her and had gotten over it would have deeply pitied and sympathized with her. Fred Norman said, his look and his tone coolly calm:

"I am backing Mr. Hallowell in a company for which he is doing chemical research work. We are hatching eggs, out of the shell, so to speak. Also we are aging and rejuvenating arthropods and the like. So far we have declared no dividends. But we have hopes."

She gave a hysterical sob of relief. "Then it's only business—not the girl at all!"

"Oh, yes, it's the girl, too," replied he. "She's an officer of the company. In fact, it was to make a place for her that I went into the enterprise originally." With an engaging air of frankness he inquired, "Anything more?"

She was gazing soberly, almost somberly, into the fire. "You'll not be offended if I ask you one question?"

"Certainly not."

"Is there anything between you and—her?"

"You mean, am I having an affair with her?"

She hung her head, but managed to make a slight nod of assent.

He laughed. "No." He laughed again. "No—

not thus far, my dear." He laughed a third time, with still stronger and stranger mockery. "She congratulated me on my engagement with a sincerity that would have piqued a man who was interested in her."

"Will you forgive me?" Josephine said. "What I've just been feeling and saying and putting you through—it's beneath both of us. I suppose a woman—no woman—can help being nasty where another woman is concerned."

With his satirical good-humored smile, "I don't in the least blame you."

"And you'll not think less of me for giving way to a thing so vulgar?"

He kissed her with a carelessness that made her wince. But she felt that she deserved it—and was grateful. He said: "Why don't you go over and see for yourself? No doubt Tetlow gave you the address—and no doubt you have remembered it."

She colored and hastily turned her head. "Don't punish me," she pleaded.

"Punish you? What nonsense! . . . Do you want me to take you over? The laboratory would interest you—and Miss Hallowell is lovelier than ever. She has an easier life now. Office work wears on women terribly."

Josephine looked at him with a beautiful smile of love and trust. "You wish to be sure I'm cured. Well, can't you see that I am?"

"I don't see why you should be. I've said nothing one way or the other."

She laughed gayly. "You can't tempt me. I'm really cured. I think the only reason I had the attack was because Mr. Tetlow so evidently believed he was speaking the truth."

"No doubt he did think he was. I'm sure, in the same circumstances, I'd think of anyone else just what he thinks of me."

"Then why do you do it, Fred?" urged she with ill-concealed eagerness. "It isn't fair to the girl, is it?"

"No one but you and Tetlow knows I'm doing it."

"You're mistaken there, dear. Tetlow says a great many people down town are talking about it—that they say you go almost every day to Jersey City to see her. He accuses you of having ruined her reputation. He says she is quite innocent. He blames the whole thing upon you."

Norman, standing with arms folded upon his broad chest, was gazing thoughtfully into the fire.

"You don't mind my telling you these things?" she said anxiously. "Of course, I know they are lies——"

"So everyone is talking about it," interrupted he, so absorbed that he had not heard her.

"You don't realize how conspicuous you are."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, it can't be helped."

"You can't afford to be mixed up in a scandal," she ventured, "or to injure a poor little creature— I'm afraid you'll have to—to stop it."

"Stop it." His eyes gleamed with mirth and something else. "It isn't my habit to heed gossip."

"But think of *her*, Fred!"

He smiled ironically. "What a generous, thoughtful dear you are!" said he.

She blushed. "I'll admit I don't like it. I'm not jealous—but I wish you weren't doing it."

"So do I!" he exclaimed, with sudden energy that astonished and disquieted her. "So do I! But since it can't be helped I shall go on."

Never had she respected him so profoundly. For the first time she had measured strength with him and had been beaten and routed. She fancied herself enormously proud; for she labored under the common delusion which mistakes for pride the silly vanity of class, or birth, or wealth, or position. She had imagined she would never lower that cherished pride of hers to any man. And she had lowered it into the dust. No wonder women had loved him, she said to herself; couldn't he do with them, even the haughtiest of them, precisely as he pleased? He had not tried to calm, much less to end her jealousy; on the contrary, he had let it flame as high as it would, had urged it higher. And she did not dare ask him, even as a loving concession to her weakness, to give up an affair upon which everybody

was putting the natural worst possible construction! On the contrary, she had given him leave to go on—because she feared—yes, knew—that if she tried to interfere he would take it as evidence that they could not get on together. What a man!

But there was more to come that day. As he was finishing dressing for dinner his sister Ursula knocked. "May I come, Frederick?" she said.

"Sure," he cried. "I'm fixing my tie."

Ursula, in a gown that displayed the last possible —many of the homelier women said impossible—inch of her beautiful shoulders, came strolling sinuously in and seated herself on the arm of the divan. She watched him, in his evening shirt, as he with much struggling did his tie. "How young you do look, Fred!" said she. "Especially in just that much clothes. Not a day over thirty."

"I'm not exactly a nonogenarian," retorted he.

"But usually your face—in spite of its smoothness and no wrinkles—has a kind of an old young—or do I mean young old?—look. You've led such a serious life."

"Um. That's the devil of it."

"You're looking particularly young to-night."

"Same to you, Urse."

"No, I'm not bad for thirty-four. People half believe me when I say I'm twenty-nine." She glanced

complacently down at her softly glistening shoulders. "I've still got my skin."

"And a mighty good one it is. Best I ever saw—except one."

She reflected a moment, then smiled. "I know it isn't Josephine's. Hers is good but not notable. Eyes and teeth are her strongholds. I suppose it's—the other lady's."

"Exactly."

"I mean the one in Jersey City."

He went on brushing his hair with not a glance at the bomb she had exploded under his very nose.

"You're a cool one," she said admiringly.

"Cool?"

"I thought you'd jump. I'm sure you never dreamed I knew."

He slid into his white waistcoat and began to button it.

"Though you might know I'd find out," she went on, "when everyone's talking."

"Everyone's always talking," said he indifferently.

"And they rattle on to beat the band when they get a chance at a man like you. Do you know what they're saying?"

"Certainly. Loosen these straps in the back of my waistcoat—the upper ones, won't you?"

As she fussed with the buckles she said: "But you don't know that they say you're going to pieces—

neglecting your cases—keeping away from your office —wasting about half of your day with your lady love. They say that you have gone stark mad—that you are rushing to ruin."

"A little looser. That's better. Thanks."

"And everyone's wondering when Josephine will hear and go on the rampage. She's so proud and so stuck on herself that they're betting she'll give you the bounce."

"Well—" getting into his coat—"you'd delight in that. For you don't like her."

"Oh—so—so," replied Ursula. "She's all right, as women go. You know we women don't ever think any too well of each other. We're 'on.' Now, I'm frank to admit I'm not worth the powder to blow me up. I can't do anything worth doing. I don't know anything worth knowing—except how to dress and make a fool of an occasional man. I'm not a good housekeeper, nor a good wife—and I'd as lief go to jail for two years as have a baby. But *I* admit I'm n. g. Most women are as poor excuses as I am, yet they think they're *grand!*"

Norman, standing before his sister and smiling mysteriously, said: "My dear Urse, let me give you a great truth in a sentence. The value of anything is not its value to itself or in itself, but its value to some one else. A woman—even as incompetent a person as you——"

"Or Josephine."

"—or Josephine—may seem to some man to be pricelessly valuable. And if she happens to seem so to him, why, she *is* so."

"Meaning—Jersey City?"

His eyes glittered curiously. "Meaning Jersey City," he said.

A long silence. Then Ursula: "But suppose Josephine hears?"

He stood beside the doorway, waiting for her to pass out. His face expressed nothing. "Let's go down. I'm hungry. We were talking about it this afternoon."

"You and Jo!"

"Josephine and I."

"And it's all right?"

"Why not?"

"You fooled her?"

"I don't stoop to that sort of thing."

"No, indeed," she laughed. "You rise to heights of deception that would make anyone else giddy. Oh, I'd give anything to have heard."

"There's nothing to deceive about," said he.

She shook her head. "You can't put it over me, Fred. You've never before made a fool of yourself about a woman. I'd like to see her. I suppose I'd be amazed. I've observed that the women who do the most extraordinary things with men are the most ordinary sort of women."

"Not to the men," said he bitterly. "Not while they're doing it."

"Does *she* seem extraordinary to *you*—still?"

He thrust his hands deep in his pockets. "What you heard is true. I'm letting everything slide—work—career—everything. I think of nothing else. Ursula, I'm mad about her—mad!"

She threw back her head, looked at him admiringly. Never had she so utterly worshiped this wonderful, powerful brother of hers. He was in love—really—madly in love—at last. So he was perfect! "How long do you think it will hold, Fred?" she said, all sympathy.

"God knows!"

"Yet—caring for her you can go on and marry another woman!"

He looked at his sister cynically. "You wouldn't have me marry *her*, would you?"

"Of course not," protested she hastily. Her passion for romance did not carry her to that idiocy. "You couldn't. She's a sort of working girl—isn't she?—anyhow, that class. No, you couldn't marry her. But how can you marry another woman?"

"How could I give up Josephine?—and give her up probably to Bob Culver?"

Ursula nodded understandingly. "But—what are you going to do?"

"How should I know? Perhaps break it off when

I marry—if you can call it breaking off, when there's nothing to break but—me."

"You don't mean—" she cried, stopping when her tone had carried her meaning.

He laughed. "Yes—that's the kind of damn fool I've been."

"You must have let her see how crazy you were about her."

"Was anyone ever able to hide that sort of insanity?"

Ursula gazed wonderingly at him, drew a long breath. "You!" she exclaimed. "Of all men—*you!*"

"Let's go down."

"She must be a deep one—dangerous," said Ursula, furious against the woman who was daring to resist her matchless brother. "Fred, I'm wild to see her. Maybe I'd see something that'd help cure you."

"You keep out of it," he replied, curtly but not with ill humor.

"It can't last long."

"It'd do for me, if it did."

"The marriage will settle everything," said Ursula with confidence.

"It's got to," said he grimly.

XI

The next day or the next but one Dorothy telephoned him. He often called her up on one pretext or another, or frankly for no reason at all beyond the overwhelming desire to hear her voice. But she had never before "disturbed" him. He had again and again assured her that he would not regard himself as "disturbed," no matter what he might be doing. She would not have it so. As he was always watching for some faint sign that she was really interested in him, this call gave him a thrill of hope—a specimen of the minor absurdities of those days of extravagant folly.

"Are you coming over to-day?" she asked.

"Right away, if you wish."

"Oh, no. Any time will do."

"I'll come at once. I'm not busy."

"No. Late this afternoon. Father asked me to call up and make sure. He wants to see you."

"Oh—not you?"

"I'm a business person," retorted she. "I know better than to annoy you, as I've often said."

He knew it was foolish, tiresome; yet he could not

resist the impulse to say, "Now that I've heard your voice I can't stay away. I'll come over to lunch."

Her answering voice was irritated. "Please don't. I'm cleaning house. You'd be in the way."

He shrank and quivered like a boy who has been publicly rebuked. "I'll come when you say," he replied.

"Not a minute before four o'clock."

"That's a long time—now you've made me crazy to see you."

"Don't talk nonsense. I must go back to work."

"What are you doing?" he asked, to detain her.

"Dusting and polishing. Molly did the sweeping and is cleaning windows now."

"What have you got on?"

"How silly you are!"

"No one knows that better than I. But I want to have a picture of you to look at."

"I've got on an old white skirt and an old shirt waist, both dirty, and a pair of tennis shoes that were white once but are gray now, where they aren't black. And I've got a pink chiffon rag tied round my hair."

"Pink is wonderful when you wear it."

"I look a fright. And my face is streaked—and my arms."

"Oh, you've got your sleeves rolled up. That's an important detail."

"You're making fun of me."

"No, I'm thinking of your arms. They are—ravishing."

"That's quite enough. Good-by."

And she rang off. He was used to her treating compliment and flattery from him in that fashion. He could not—or was it would not?—understand why. He had learned that she was not at all the indifferent and unaware person in the matter of her physical charms he had at first fancied her. On the contrary, she had more than her share of physical vanity—not more than was her right, in view of her charms, but more than she could carry off well. With many a secret smile he had observed that she thought herself perfect physically. This did not repel him; it never does repel a man—when and so long as he is under the enchantment of the charms the woman more or less exaggerates. But, while he had often seen women with inordinate physical vanity, so often that he had come to regarding it as an essential part of feminine character, never before had he seen one so content with her own good opinion of herself that she was indifferent to appreciation from others.

He did not go back to the office after lunch. Several important matters were coming up; if he got within reach they might conspire to make it impossible for him to be with her on time. If his partners, his clients knew! He the important man of affairs kneeling at the feet of a nobody!—and why? Chiefly because he

was unable to convince her that he amounted to anything. His folly nauseated him. He sat in a corner in the dining room of the Lawyers' Club and drank one whisky and soda after another and brooded over his follies and his unhappiness, muttering monotonously from time to time: "No wonder she makes a fool of me. I invite it, I beg for it, damned idiot that I am!" By three o'clock he had drunk enough liquor to have dispatched the average man for several days. It had produced no effect upon him beyond possibly a slight aggravation of his moodiness.

It took only twenty minutes to get from New York to her house. He set out at a few minutes after three; arrived at twenty minutes to four. As experience of her ways had taught him that she was much less friendly when he disobeyed her requests, he did not dare go to the house, but, after looking at it from a corner two blocks away, made a detour that would use up some of the time he had to waste. And as he wandered he indulged in his usual alternations between self-derision and passion. He appeared at the house at five minutes to four. Patrick, who with Molly his wife looked after the domestic affairs, was at the front gate gazing down the street in the direction from which he always came. At sight of him Pat came running. Norman quickened his pace, and every part of his nervous system was in turmoil.

"Mr. Hallowell—he's—*dead*," gasped Pat.

"Dead?" echoed Norman.

"Three quarters of an hour ago, sir. He came from the lobatry, walked in the sitting room where Miss Dorothy was oiling the furniture and I was oiling the floor. And he sets down—and he looks at her—as cool and calm as could be—and he says, 'Dorothy, my child, I'm dying.' And she stands up straight and looks at him curious like—just curious like. And he says, 'Dorothy, good-by.' And he shivers, and I jumps up just in time to catch him from rolling to the floor. He was dead then—so the doctor says."

"Dead!" repeated Norman, looking round vaguely.

He went on to the house, Pat walking beside him and chattering on and on—a stream of words Norman did not hear. As he entered the open front door Dorothy came down the stairs. He had thought he knew how white her skin was. But he did not know until then. And from that ghostly pallor looked the eyes of grief beyond tears. He advanced toward her. But she seemed to be wrapped in an atmosphere of aloofness. He felt himself a stranger and an alien. After a brief silence she said: "I don't realize it. I've been upstairs where Pat carried him—but I don't realize it. It simply can't be."

"Do you know what he wished to say to me?" he asked.

"No. I guess he felt this coming. Probably it came quicker than he expected. Now I can see that

he hasn't been well for several days. But he would never let anything about illness be said. He thought talking of those things made them worse."

"You have relatives—somebody you wish me to telegraph?"

She shook her head. "No one. Our relatives out West are second cousins or further away. They care nothing about us. No, I'm all alone."

The tears sprang to his eyes. But there were no tears in her eyes, no forlornness in her voice. She was simply stating a fact. He said: "I'll look after everything. Don't give it a moment's thought."

"No, I'll arrange," replied she. "It'll give me something to do—something to do for him. You see, it's my last chance." And she turned to ascend the stairs. "Something to do," she repeated dully. "I wish I hadn't cleaned house this morning. That would be something more to do."

This jarred on him—then brought the tears to his eyes again. How childish she was!—and how desolate! "But you'll let me stay?" he pleaded. "You'll need me. At any rate, I want to feel that you do."

"I'd rather you didn't stay," she said, in the same calm, remote way. "I'd rather be alone with him, this last time. I'll go up and sit there until they take him away. And then—in a few days I'll see what to do —I'll send for you."

"I can't leave you at such a time," he cried. "You

haven't realized yet. When you do you will need some one."

"You don't understand," she interrupted. "He and I understood each other in some ways. I know he'd not want—anyone round."

At her slight hesitation before "anyone" he winced.

"I must be alone with him," she went on. "Thank you, but I want to go now."

"Not just yet," he begged. Then, seeing the shadow of annoyance on her beautiful white face, he rose and said: "I'm going. I only want to help you." He extended his hand impulsively, drew it back before she had the chance to refuse it. For he felt that she would refuse it. He said, "You know you can rely on me."

"But I don't need anybody," replied she. "Good-by."

"If I can do anything——"

"Pat will telephone." She was already halfway upstairs.

He found Pat in the front yard, and arranged with him to get news and to send messages by way of the drug store at the corner, so that she would know nothing about it. He went to a florist's in New York and sent masses of flowers. And then—there was nothing more to do. He stopped in at the club and drank and gambled until far into the morning. He fretted gloomily about all the next day, riding alone in the Park,

driving with his sister, drinking and gambling at the club again and smiling cynically to himself at the covert glances his acquaintances exchanged. He was growing used to those glances. He cared not the flip of a penny for them.

On the third day came the funeral, and he went. He did not let his cabman turn in behind the one carriage that followed the hearse. At the graveyard he stood afar off, watching her in her simple new black, noting her calm. She seemed thinner, but he thought it might be simply her black dress. He could see no change in her face. As she was leaving the grave, she looked in his direction but he was uncertain whether she had seen him. Pat and Molly were in the big, gloomy looking carriage with her.

He ventured to go to the front gate an hour later. Pat came out. "It's no use to go in, Mr. Norman," he said. "She'll not see you. She's shut up in her own room."

"Hasn't she cried yet, Pat?"

"Not yet. We're waiting for it, sir. We're afraid her mind will give way. At least, Molly is. I don't think so. She's a queer young lady—as queer as she looks—though at first you'd never think it. She's always looking different. I never seen so many persons in one."

"Can't Molly *make* her cry?—by talking about him?"

"She's tried, sir. It wasn't no use. Why, Miss Dorothy talks about him just as if he was still here." Pat wiped the sweat from his forehead. "I've been in many a house of mourning, but never through such a strain as this. Somehow I feel as if I'd never before been round where there was anyone that'd lost somebody they *really* cared about. Weeping and moaning don't amount to much beside what she's doing."

Norman stayed round for an hour or more, then rushed away distracted. He drank like a madman—drank himself into a daze, and so got a few hours of a kind of sleep. He was looking haggard and wild now, and everyone avoided him, though in fact there was not the least danger of an outburst of temper. His sister—Josephine—the office—several clients telephoned for him. To all he sent the same refusal—that he was too ill to see anyone. Not until the third day after the funeral did Dorothy telephone for him.

He took an ice-cold bath, got himself together as well as he could, and reached the house in Jersey City about half past three in the afternoon. She came gliding into the room like a ghost, trailing a black negligée that made the whiteness of her skin startling. Her eyelids were heavy and dark, but unreddened. She gazed at him with calm, clear melancholy, and his heart throbbed and ached for her. She seated herself, clasped her hands loosely in her lap, and said:

"I've sent for you so that I could settle things up."

"Your father's affairs? Can't I do it better?"

"He had arranged everything. There are only the papers—his notes—and he wrote out the addresses of the men they were to be sent to. No, I mean settle things up with you."

"You mustn't bother about that," said he. "Besides, there's nothing to settle."

"I shan't pretend I'm going to try to pay you back," she went on, as if he had not spoken. "I never could do it. But you will get part at least by selling this furniture and the things at the laboratory."

"Dorothy—please," he implored. "Don't you understand you're to stay on here, just the same? What sort of man do you think I am? I did this for you, and you know it."

"But *I* did it for my father," replied she, "and he's gone." She was resting her melancholy gaze upon him. "I couldn't take anything from you. You didn't think I was that kind?"

He was silent.

"I cared nothing about the scandal—what people said—so long as I was doing it for him. . . . I'd have done *anything* for him. Sometimes I thought you were going to compel me to do things I'd have hated to do. I hope I wronged you, but I feared you meant that." She sat thinking several minutes, sighed wearily. "It's all over now. It doesn't matter. I needn't bother about it any more."

"Dorothy, let's not talk of these things now," said Norman. "There's no hurry. I want you to wait until you are calm and have thought everything over. Then I'm sure you'll see that you ought to stay on."

"How could I?" she asked wonderingly.

"Why not? Am I demanding anything of you? You know I'm not—and that I never shall."

"But there's no reason on earth why *you* should support *me*. I can work. Why shouldn't I? And if I didn't, if I stayed on here, what sort of woman would I be?"

He was unable to find an answer. He was trying not to see a look in her face—or was it in her soul, revealed through her eyes?—a look that made him think for the first time of a resemblance between her and her father.

"You see yourself I've got to go. Any money I could earn wouldn't more than pay for a room and board somewhere."

"You can let me advance you money while you—" He hesitated, had an idea which he welcomed eagerly—"while you study for the stage. Yes, that's the sensible thing. You can learn to act. Then you will be able to make a decent living."

She slowly shook her head. "I've no talent for it—and no liking. No, Mr. Norman, I must go back to work—and right away."

"But at least wait until you've looked into the stage

business," he urged. "You may find that you like it and that you have talent for it."

"I can't take any more from you," she said.

"You think I am not to be trusted. I'm not going to say now how I feel toward you. But I can honestly say one thing. Now that you are all alone and unprotected, you needn't have the least fear of me."

She smiled faintly. "I see you don't believe me. Well, it doesn't matter. I've seen Mr. Tetlow and he has given me a place at twelve a week in his office."

Norman sank back in his chair. "He is in for himself now?"

"No. He's head clerk for Pitchley & Culver."

"Culver!" exclaimed Norman. "I don't want you to go into Culver's office. He's a scoundrel."

Again Dorothy smiled faintly. Norman colored. "I know he stands well—as well as I do. But I can't trust you with him. That sounds ridiculous but—it's true."

"I think I can trust myself," she said quietly. Her grave regard fixed his. "Don't you?" she asked.

His eyes lowered. "Yes," he replied. "But—why shouldn't you come back with us? I'll see that you get a much better position than Culver's giving you."

Over her face crept one of those mysterious transformations that made her so bafflingly fascinating to him. Behind that worldly-wise, satirical mask was she mocking at him? All she said was: "I couldn't work

there. I've settled it with Mr. Tetlow. I go to work to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" he cried, starting up.

"And I've found a place to live. Pat and Molly will take care of things for you here."

"Dorothy! You don't *mean* this? You're not going to break off?"

"I shan't see you again—except as we may meet by accident."

"Do you realize what you're saying means to me?" he cried. "Don't you know how I love you?" He advanced toward her. She stood and waited passively, looking at him. "Dorothy—my love—do you want to kill me?"

"When are you to be married?" she asked quietly.

"You are playing with me!" he cried. "You are tormenting me. What have I ever done that you should treat me this way?" He caught her unresisting hands and kissed them. "Dear—my dear—don't you care for me at all?"

"No," she said placidly. "I've always told you so."

He seized her in his arms, kissed her with a frenzy that was savage, ferocious. "You will drive me mad. You *have* driven me mad!" he muttered. And he added, unconscious that he was speaking his thoughts, so distracted was he: "You *must* love me—you *must!* No woman has ever resisted me. You cannot."

She drew herself away from him, stood before him

like snow, like ice. "One thing I have never told you. I'll tell you now," she said deliberately. "I despise you."

He fell back a step and the chill of her coldness seemed to be freezing the blood in his veins.

"I've always despised you," she went on, and he shivered before that contemptuous word—it seemed only the more contemptuous for her calmness. "Sometimes I've despised you thoroughly—again only a little—but always that feeling."

For a moment he thought she had at last stung his pride into the semblance of haughtiness. He was able to look at her with mocking eyes and to say, "I congratulate you on your cleverness in concealing your feelings."

"It wasn't my cleverness," she said wearily. "It was your blindness. I never deceived you."

"No, you never have," he replied sincerely. "Perhaps I deserve to be despised. Again, perhaps if you knew the world—the one I live in—better, you'd think less harshly of me."

"I don't think harshly of you. How could I—after all you did for my father?"

"Dorothy, if you'll stay here and study for the stage—or anything you choose—I promise you I'll never speak of my feeling for you—or show it in any way—unless you yourself give me leave."

She smiled with childlike pathos. "You ought not

to tempt me. Do you want me to keep on despising you? Can't you ever be fair with me?"

The sad, frank gentleness of the appeal swung his unhinged mind to the other extreme—from the savagery of passion to a frenzy of remorse. "Fair to *you?* No," he cried, "because I love you. Oh, I'm ashamed —bitterly ashamed. I'm capable of any baseness to get you. You're right. You can't trust me. In going you're saving me from myself." He hesitated, stared wildly, appalled at the words that were fighting for utterance—the words about marriage—about marrying her! He said hoarsely: "I am mad—mad! I don't know what I'm saying. Good-by— For God's sake, don't think the worst of me, Dorothy. Good-by. I *will* be a man again—I will!"

And he wrung her hand and, talking incoherently, he rushed from the room and from the house.

XII

He went straight home and sought his sister. She had that moment come in from tea after a matinée. She talked about the play—how badly it was acted—and about the women she had seen at tea—how badly dressed they were. "It's hard to say which is the more dreadful—the ugly, misshapen human race without clothes or in the clothes it insists on wearing. And the talk at that tea! Does no one ever say a pleasant thing about anyone? Doesn't anyone ever do a pleasant thing that can be spoken about? I read this morning Tolstoy's advice about resolving to think all day only nice thoughts and sticking to it. That sounded good to me, and I decided to try it." Ursula laughed and squirmed about in her tight-fitting dress that made an enchanting display of her figure. "What is one to do? *I* can't be a fraud, for one. And if I had stuck to my resolution I'd have spent the day in lying. What's the matter, Fred?" Now that her attention was attracted she observed more closely. "What *have* you been doing? You look—frightful!"

"I've broken with her," replied he.

"With Jo?" she cried. "Why, Fred, you can't —you can't—with the wedding only five days away!"

"Not with Jo."

Ursula breathed noisy relief. She said cheerfully: "Oh—with the other. Well, I'm glad it's over."

"Over?" said he sardonically. "Over? It's only begun."

"But you'll stick it out, Fred. You've made a fool of yourself long enough. What was the girl playing for? Marriage?"

He nodded. "I guess so." He laughed curtly. "And she almost won."

Ursula smiled with fine mockery. "Almost, but not quite. I know you men. Women do that sort of fool thing. But men—never—at least not the ambitious, snobbish New York men."

"She almost won," he repeated. "At least, I almost did it. If I had stayed a minute longer I'd have done it."

"You like to think you would," mocked Ursula. "But if you had tried to say the words your lungs would have collapsed, your vocal chords snapped and your tongue shriveled."

"I am not so damn sure I shan't do it yet," he burst out fiercely.

"But I am," said Ursula, calm, brisk, practical. "What's she going to do?"

"Going to work."

Ursula laughed joyously. "What a joke! A woman go to work when she needn't!"

"She is going to work."

"To work another man."

"She meant it."

"How easily women fool men!—even the wise men like you."

"She meant it."

"She still hopes to marry you—or she has heard of your marriage——"

Norman lifted his head. Into his face came the cynical, suspicious expression.

"And has fastened on some other man. Or perhaps she's found some good provider who's willing to marry her."

Norman sprang up, his eyes blazing, his mouth working cruelly. "By God!" he cried. "If I thought that!"

His sister was alarmed. Such a man—in such a delirium—might commit any absurdity. He flung himself down in despair. "Urse, why can't I get rid of this thing? It's ruining me. It's killing me!"

"Your good sense tells you if you had her you'd be over it—" She snapped her fingers—"like that."

"Yes—yes—I know it! But—" He groaned—"she has broken with me."

Ursula went to him and kissed him and took his head in her arms. "What a *boy*-boy it is!" she said

tenderly. "Oh, it must be dreadful to have always had whatever one wanted and then to find something one can't have. We women are used to it—and the usual sort of man. But not your sort, Freddy—and I'm so sorry for you."

"I want her, Urse—I want her," he groaned, and he was almost sobbing. "My God, I *can't* get on without her."

"Now, Freddy dear, listen to me. You know she's 'way, 'way beneath you—that she isn't at all what you've got in the habit of picturing her—that it's all delusion and nonsense——"

"I want her," he repeated. "I want her."

"You'd be ashamed if you had her as a wife—wouldn't you?"

He was silent.

"She isn't a *lady*."

"I don't know," replied he.

"She hasn't any sense. A low sort of cunning, yes. But not brains—not enough to hold you."

"I don't know," replied he. "She's got enough for a woman. And—I *want* her."

"She isn't to be compared with Josephine."

"But I don't want Josephine. I want *her*."

"But which do you want to *marry?*—to bring forward as your wife?—to spend your life with?"

"I know. I'm a mad fool. But, Urse, I can't help it." He stood up suddenly. "I've used every weapon

I've got. Even pride — and it skulked away. My sense of humor—and it weakened. My will—and it snapped."

"Is she so wonderful?"

"She is so—elusive. I can't understand her—I can't touch her. I can't find her. She keeps me going like a man chasing an echo."

"Like a man chasing an echo," repeated Ursula reflectively. "I understand. It is maddening. She must be clever—in her way."

"Or very simple. God knows which; I don't—and sometimes I think she doesn't, either." He made a gesture of dismissal. "Well, it's finished. I must pull myself together—or try to."

"You will," said his sister confidently. "A fortnight from now you'll be laughing at yourself."

"I am now. I have been all along. But—it does no good."

She had to go and dress. But she could not leave until she had tried to make him comfortable. He was drinking brandy and soda and staring at his feet which were stretched straight out toward the fire. "Where's your sense of humor?" she demanded. "Throw yourself on your sense of humor. It's a friend that sticks when all others fail."

"It's my only hope," he said with a grim smile. "I can see myself. No wonder she despises me."

"Despises you?" scoffed Ursula. "A *woman* des-

pise *you!* She's crazy about you, I'll bet anything you like. Before you're through with this you'll find out I'm right. And then—you'll have no use for her."

"She despises me."

"Well—what of it? Really, Fred, it irritates me to see you absolutely unlike yourself. Why, you're as broken-spirited as a henpecked old husband."

"Just that," he admitted, rising and looking drearily about. "I don't know what the devil to do next. Everything seems to have stopped."

"Going to see Josephine this evening?"

"I suppose so," was his indifferent reply.

"You'll have to dress after dinner. There's no time now."

"Dress?" he inquired vaguely. "Why dress? Why do anything?"

She thought he would not go to Josephine but would hide in his club and drink. But she was mistaken. Toward nine o'clock he, in evening dress, with the expression of a horse in a treadmill, rang the bell of Josephine's house and passed in at the big bronze doors. The butler must have particularly admired the way he tossed aside his coat and hat. As soon as he was in the presence of his fiancée he saw that she was again in the throes of some violent agitation.

She began at once: "I've just had the most frightful scene with father," she said. "He's been hearing a lot of stuff about you down town and it set him wild."

"Do you mind if I smoke a cigar?" said he, looking at her unseeingly with haggard, cold eyes. "And may I have some whisky?"

She rang. "I hope the servants didn't hear him," she said. Then, as a step sounded outside she put on an air of gayety, as if she were still laughing at some jest he had made. In the doorway appeared her father —one of those big men who win half the battle in advance on personal appearance of unconquerable might. Burroughs was noted for his generosity and for his violent temper. As a rule men of the largeness necessary to handling large affairs are free from petty vindictiveness. They are too busy for hatred. They do not forgive; they are most careful not to forget; they simply stand ready at any moment to do whatever it is to their interest to do, regardless of friendships or animosities. Burroughs was an exception in that he got his highest pleasure out of pursuing his enemies. He enjoyed this so keenly that several times—so it was said—he had sacrificed real money to satisfy a revenge. But these rumors may have wronged him. It is hardly probable that a man who would let a weakness carry him to that pitch of folly could have escaped destruction. For of all the follies revenge is the most dangerous—as well as the most fatuous.

Burroughs had a big face. Had he looked less powerful the bigness of his features, the spread of cheek and jowl, would have been grotesque. As it was, the

face was impressive, especially when one recalled how many, many millions he owned and how many more he controlled. The control was better than the ownership. The millions he owned made him a coward—he was afraid he might lose them. The millions he controlled, and of course used for his own enrichment, made him brave, for if they were lost in the daring ventures in which he freely staked them, why, the loss was not his, and he could shift the blame. Usually Norman treated him with great respect, for his business gave the firm nearly half its total income, and it was his daughter and his wealth, prestige and power, that Norman was marrying. But this evening he looked at the great man with a superciliousness that was peculiarly disrespectful from so young a man to one well advanced toward old age. Norman had been feeling relaxed, languid, exhausted. The signs of battle in that powerful face nerved him, keyed him up at once. He waited with a joyful impatience while the servant was bringing cigars and whisky. The enormous quantities of liquor he had drunk in the last few days had not been without effect. Alcohol, the general stimulant, inevitably brings out in strong relief a man's dominant qualities. The dominant quality of Norman was love of combat.

"Josephine tells me you are in a blue fury," said Norman pleasantly when the door was closed and the three were alone. "No—not a blue fury. A black fury."

At the covert insolence of his tone Josephine became violently agitated. "Father," she said, with the imperiousness of an only and indulged child, "I have asked you not to interfere between Fred and me. I thought I had your promise."

"I said I'd think about it," replied her father. He had a heavy voice that now and then awoke some string of the lower octaves of the piano in the corner to a dismal groan. "I've decided to speak out."

"That's right, sir," said Norman. "Is your quarrel with me?"

Josephine attempted an easy laugh. "It's that silly story we were talking about the other day, Fred."

"I supposed so," said he. "You are not smoking, Mr. Burroughs—" He laughed amiably—"at least not a cigar."

"The doctor only allows me one, and I've had it," replied Burroughs, his eyes sparkling viciously at this flick of the whip. "What is the truth about that business, Norman?"

Norman's amused glance encountered the savage glare mockingly. "Why do you ask?" he inquired.

"Because my daughter's happiness is at stake. Because I cannot but resent a low scandal about a man who wishes to marry my daughter."

"Very proper, sir," said Norman graciously.

"My daughter," continued Burroughs with accelerating anger, "tells me you have denied the story."

"'Father . . . I have asked you not to interfere between Fred and me.'"

Norman interrupted with an astonished look at Josephine. She colored, gazed at him imploringly. His face terrified her. When body and mind are in health and at rest the fullness of the face hides the character to a great extent. But when a human being is sick or very tired the concealing roundness goes and in the clearly marked features the true character is revealed. In Norman's face, haggard by his wearing emotions, his character stood forth—the traits of strength, of tenacity, of inevitable purpose. And Josephine saw and dreaded.

"But," Burroughs went on, "I have it on the best authority that it is true."

Norman, looking into the fascinating face of danger, was thrilled. "Then you wish to break off the engagement?" he said in the gentlest, smoothest tone.

Burroughs brought his fist down on the table—and Norman recognized the gesture of the bluffer. "I wish you to break off with that woman!" he cried. "I insist upon it—upon positive assurances from you."

"Fred!" pleaded Josephine. "Don't listen to him. Remember, *I* have said nothing."

He had long been looking for a justifying grievance against her. It now seemed to him that he had found it. "Why should you?" he said genially but with subtle irony, "since you are getting your father to speak for you."

There was just enough truth in this to entangle her

and throw her into disorder. She had been afraid of the consequences of her father's interfering with a man so spirited as Norman, but at the same time she had longed to have some one put a check upon him. Norman's suave remark made her feel that he could see into her inmost soul—could see the anger, the jealousy, the doubt, the hatred-tinged love, the love-saturated hate seething and warring there.

Burroughs was saying: "If we had not committed ourselves so deeply, I should deal very differently with this matter."

"Why should that deter you?" said Norman—and Josephine gave a piteous gasp. "If this goes much farther, I assure you *I* shall not be deterred."

Burroughs, firmly planted in a big leather chair, looked at the young man in puzzled amazement. "I see you think you have us in your power," he said at last. "But you are mistaken."

"On the contrary," rejoined the young man, "I see you believe you have me in your power. And in a sense you are *not* mistaken."

"Father, he is right," cried Josephine agitatedly. "I shouldn't love and respect him as I do if he would submit to this hectoring."

"Hectoring!" exclaimed Burroughs. "Josephine, leave the room. I cannot discuss this matter properly before you."

"I hope you will not leave, Josephine," said Nor-

man. "There is nothing to be said that you cannot and ought not to hear."

"I'm not an infant, father," said Josephine. "Besides, it is as Fred says. He has done nothing—improper."

"Then why does he not say so?" demanded Burroughs, seeing a chance to recede from his former too advanced position. "That's all I ask."

"But I told you all about it, father," said Josephine angrily. "They've been distorting the truth, and the truth is to his credit."

Norman avoided the glance she sent to him; it was only a glance and away, for more formidably than ever his power was enthroned in his haggard face. He stood with his back to the fire and it was plain that the muscles of his strong figure were braced to give and to receive a shock. "Mr. Burroughs," he said, "your daughter is mistaken. Perhaps it is my fault —in having helped her to mislead herself. The plain truth is, I have become infatuated with a young woman. She cares nothing about me—has repulsed me. I have been and am making a fool of myself about her. I've been hoping to cure myself. I still hope. But I am not cured."

There was absolute silence in the room. Norman stole a glance at Josephine. She was sitting erect, a greenish pallor over her ghastly face.

He said: "If she will take me, now that she knows

the truth, I shall be grateful—and I shall make what effort I can to do my best."

He looked at her and she at him. And for an instant her eyes softened. There was the appeal of weak human heart to weak human heart in his gaze. Her lip quivered. A brief struggle between vanity and love—and vanity, the stronger, the strongest force in her life, dominating it since earliest babyhood and only seeming to give way to love when love came—it was vanity that won. She stiffened herself and her mouth curled with proud scorn. She laughed—a sneer of jealous rage. "Father," she said, "the lady in the case is a common typewriter in his office."

But to men—especially to practical men—differences of rank and position among women are not fundamentally impressive. Man is in the habit of taking what he wants in the way of womankind wherever he finds it, and he understands that habit in other men. He was furious with Norman, but he did not sympathize with his daughter's extreme attitude. He said to Norman sharply:

"You say you have broken with the woman?"

"She has broken with me," replied Norman.

"At any rate, everything is broken off."

"Apparently."

"Then there is no reason why the marriage should not go on." He turned to his daughter. "If you understood men, you would attach no importance to this

matter. As you yourself said, the woman isn't a lady —isn't in our class. That sort of thing amounts to nothing. Norman has acted well. He has shown the highest kind of honesty—has been truthful where most men would have shifted and lied. Anyhow, things have gone too far." Not without the soundest reasons had Burroughs accepted Norman as his son-in-law; and he had no fancy for giving him up, when men of his preëminent fitness were so rare.

There was another profound silence. Josephine looked at Norman. Had he returned her gaze, the event might have been different; for within her there was now going on a struggle between two nearly evenly matched vanities—the vanity of her own outraged pride and the vanity of what the world would say and think, if the engagement were broken off at that time and in those circumstances. But he did not look at her. He kept his eyes fixed upon the opposite wall, and there was no sign of emotion of any kind in his stony features. Josephine rose, suppressed a sob, looked arrogant scorn from eyes shining with tears—tears of self-pity. "Send him away, father," she said. "He has tried to degrade *me!* I am done with him." And she rushed from the room, her father half starting from his chair to detain her.

He turned angrily on Norman. "A hell of a mess you've made!" he cried.

"A hell of a mess," replied the young man.

"Of course she'll come round. But you've got to do your part."

"It's settled," said Norman. And he threw his cigar into the fireplace. "Good night."

"Hold on!" cried Burroughs. "Before you go, you must see Josie alone and talk with her."

"It would be useless," said Norman. "You know her."

Burroughs laid his hand friendlily but heavily upon the young man's shoulder. "This outburst of nonsense might cost you two young people your happiness for life. This is no time for jealousy and false pride. Wait a moment."

"Very well," said Norman. "But it is useless." He understood Josephine now—he who had become a connoisseur of love. He knew that her vanity-founded love had vanished.

Burroughs disappeared in the direction his daughter had taken. Norman waited several minutes—long enough slowly to smoke a cigarette. Then he went into the hall and put on his coat with deliberation. No one appeared, not even a servant. He went out into the street.

In the morning papers he found the announcement of the withdrawal of the invitations—and from half a column to several columns of comment, much of it extremely unflattering to him.

XIII

When a "high life" engagement such as that of Norman and Miss Burroughs, collapses on the eve of the wedding, the gossip and the scandal, however great, are but a small part of the mess. Doubtless many a marriage—and not in high life alone, either—has been put through, although the one party or the other or both have discovered that disaster was inevitable—solely because of the appalling muddle the sensible course would precipitate. In the case of the Norman-Burroughs fiasco, there were—to note only a few big items—such difficulties as several car loads of presents from all parts of the earth to be returned, a house furnished throughout and equipped to the last scullery maid and stable boy to be disposed of, the entire Burroughs domestic economy which had been reconstructed to be put back upon its former basis.

It is not surprising that, as Ursula Fitzhugh was credibly informed, Josephine almost decided to send for Bob Culver and marry him on the day before the day appointed for her marriage to Fred. The reason given for her not doing this sounded plausible. Culver, despairing of making the match on which his ambition—

and therefore his heart was set—and seeing a chance to get suddenly rich, had embarked for a career as a blackmailer of corporations. That is, he nosed about for a big corporation stealthily doing or arranging to do some unlawful but highly profitable acts; he bought a few shares of its stock, using a fake client as a blind; he then proceeded to threaten it with exposure, expensive hindrances and the like, unless it bought him off at a huge profit to himself. This business was regarded as most disreputable and—thanks to the power of the big corporations over the courts—had resulted in the sending of several of its practisers to jail or on hasty journeys to foreign climes. But Culver, almost if not quite as good a lawyer as Norman, was too clever to be caught in that way. However, while he was getting very rich rapidly, he was as yet far from rich enough to overcome the detestation of old Burroughs, and to be eligible for the daughter.

So, Josephine sailed away to Europe, with the consolation that her father was so chagrined by the fizzle that he had withdrawn his veto upon the purchase of a foreign title—that veto having been the only reason she had looked at home for a husband. Strange indeed are the ways of love—never stranger than when it comes into contact with the vanities of wealth and social position and the other things that cause a human being to feel that he or she is lifted clear of and high above the human condition. Josephine had her consolation. For

Norman the only consolation was escape from a marriage which had become so irksome in anticipation that he did not dare think what it would be in the reality. Over against this consolation was set a long list of disasters. He found himself immediately shunned by all his friends. Their professed reason was that he had acted shabbily in the breaking of the engagement; for, while it was assumed that Josephine must have done the actual breaking, it was also assumed that he must have given her provocation and to spare. This virtuous indignation was in large part mere pretext, as virtuous indignation in frail mortals toward frail mortals is apt to be. The real reason for shying off from Norman was his atmosphere of impending downfall. And certainly that atmosphere had eaten away and dissipated all his former charm. He looked dull and boresome—and he was.

But the chief disaster was material. As has been said, old Burroughs, in his own person and in the enterprises he controlled, gave Norman's firm about half its income. The day Josephine sailed, Lockyer, senior partner of the firm, got an intimation that unless Norman left, Burroughs would take his law business elsewhere, and would "advise" others of their clients to follow his example. Lockyer no sooner heard than he began to bestir himself. He called into consultation the learned Benchley and the astute Sanders and the soft and sly Lockyer junior. There could be no question

that Norman must be got rid of. The only point was, who should inform the lion that he had been deposed?

After several hours of anxious discussion, Lockyer, his inward perturbations hid beneath that mask of smug and statesmanlike respectability, entered the lion's den —a sick lion, sick unto death probably, but not a dead lion. "When you're ready to go uptown, Frederick," said he in his gentlest, most patriarchal manner, "let me know. I want to have a little talk with you."

Norman, heavy eyed and listless, looked at the handsome old fraud. As he looked something of the piercing quality and something of the humorous came back into his eyes. "Sit down and say it now," said he.

"I'd prefer to talk where we can be quiet."

Norman rang his bell and when an office boy appeared, said· "No one is to disturb me until I ring again." Then as the boy withdrew he said to Lockyer: "Now, sir, what is it?"

Lockyer strolled to the window, looked out as if searching for something he failed to find, came back to the chair on the opposite side of the desk from Norman, seated himself. "I don't know how to begin," said he. "It is hard to say painful things to anyone I have such an affection for as I have for you."

Norman pushed a sheet of letter paper across the desk toward his partner. "Perhaps that will help you," observed he carelessly.

Lockyer put on his nose glasses with the gesture of

grace and intellect that was famous. He read—a brief demand for a release from the partnership and a request for an immediate settlement. Lockyer blinked off his glasses with the gesture that was as famous and as admiringly imitated by lesser legal lights as was his gesture of be-spectacling himself. "This is most astounding, my boy," said he. "It is most—most——"

"Gratifying?" suggested Norman with a sardonic grin.

"Not in the least, Frederick. The very reverse—the exact reverse."

Norman gave a shrug that said "Why do you persist in those frauds—and with *me?*" But he did not speak.

"I know," pursued Lockyer, "that you would not have taken this step without conclusive reasons. And I shall not venture the impertinence of prying or of urging."

"Thanks," said Norman drily. "Now, as to the terms of settlement."

Lockyer, from observation and from gossip, had a pretty shrewd notion of the state of his young partner's mind, and drew the not unwarranted conclusion that he would be indifferent about terms—would be "easy." With the suavity of Mr. Great-and-Good-Heart he said: "My dear boy, there can't be any question of money with us. We'll do the generously fair thing—for, we're not hucksterers but gentlemen."

"That sounds terrifying," observed the young man, with a faint ironic smile. "I feel my shirt going and the cold winds whistling about my bare body. To save time, let *me* state the terms. You want to be rid of me. I want to go. It's a whim with me. It's a necessity for you."

Lockyer shifted uneasily at these evidences of unimpaired mentality and undaunted spirit.

"Here are my terms," proceeded Norman. "You are to pay me forty thousand a year for five years—unless I open an office or join another firm. In that case, payments are to cease from the date of my re-entering practice."

Lockyer leaned back and laughed benignantly. "My dear Norman," he said with a gently remonstrant shake of the head, "those terms are impossible. Forty thousand a year! Why that is within ten thousand of the present share of any of us but you. It is the income of nearly three quarters of a million at six per cent—of a million at four per cent!"

"Very well," said Norman, settling back in his chair. "Then I stand pat."

"Now, my dear Norman, permit me to propose terms that are fair to all——"

"When I said I stood pat I meant that I would stay on." His eyes laughed at Lockyer. "I guess we can live without Burroughs and his dependents. Maybe they will find they can't live without us." He slowly

leaned forward until, with his forearms against the edge of his desk, he was concentrating a memorable gaze upon Lockyer. "Mr. Lockyer," said he, "I have been exercising my privilege as a free man to make a damn fool of myself. I shall continue to exercise it so long as I feel disposed that way. But let me tell you something. I can afford to do it. If a man's asset is money, or character or position or relatives and friends or popular favor or any other perishable article, he must take care how he trifles with it. He may find himself irretrievably ruined. But my asset happens to be none of those things. It is one that can be lost or damaged only by insanity or death. Do you follow me?"

The old man looked at him with the sincere and most flattering tribute of compelled admiration. "What a mind you've got, Frederick—and what courage!"

"You accept my terms?"

"If the others agree—and I think they will."

"They will," said Norman.

The old man was regarding him with eyes that had genuine anxiety in them. "Why *do* you do it, Fred?" he said.

"Because I wish to be free," replied Norman. He would never have told the full truth to that incredulous old cynic of a time-server—the truth that he was resigning at the dictation of a pride which forbade him to involve others in the ruin he, in his madness, was bent upon.

"I don't mean, why do you resign," said Lockyer. "I mean the other—the—woman."

Norman laughed harshly.

"I've seen too much of the world not to understand," continued Lockyer. "The measureless power of woman over man—especially—pardon me, my dear Norman—especially a bad woman!"

"The measureless power of a man's imagination over himself," rejoined Norman. "Did you ever see or hear of a man without imagination being upset by a woman? It's in here, Mr. Lockyer"—he rapped his forehead—"altogether in here."

"You realize that. Yet you go on—and for such a—pardon me, my boy, for saying it—for such a trifling object."

"What does 'trifling' mean, sir?" replied the young man. "What is trifling and what is important? It depends upon the point of view. What I want—that is vital. What I do not want—that is paltry. It's my nature to go for what I happen to want—to go for it with all there is in me. I will take nothing else—nothing else."

There was in his eyes the glitter called insanity—the glitter that reflects the state of mind of any strong man when possessed of one of those fixed ideas that are the idiosyncrasy of the strong. It would have been impossible for Lockyer to be possessed in that way; he had not the courage nor the concentration nor the inde-

pendence of soul; like most men, even able men, he dealt only in the conventional. Not in his wildest youth could he have wrecked or injured himself for a woman; women, for him, occupied their conventional place in the scheme of things, and had no allure beyond the conventionally proper and the conventionally improper—for, be it remembered, vice has its beaten track no less than virtue and most of the vicious are as tame and unimaginative as the plodders in the high roads of propriety. Still, Lockyer had associated with strong men, men of boundless desires; thus, he could in a measure sympathize with his young associate. What a pity that these splendid powers should be perverted from the ordinary desires of strong men!

Norman rose, to end the interview. "My address is my house. They will forward—if I go away."

Lockyer gave him a hearty handclasp, made a few phrases about good wishes and the like, left him alone. The general opinion was that Norman was done for. But Lockyer could not see it. He had seen too many men fall only to rise out of lowest depths to greater heights than they had fallen from. And Norman was only thirty-seven. Perhaps this would prove to be merely a dip in a securely brilliant career and not a fall at all. In that case—with such a brain, such a genius for the lawlessness of the law, what a laughing on the other side of the mouth there might yet be among young Norman's enemies—and friends!

He spent most of the next few days—the lunch time, the late afternoon, finally the early morning hours—lurking about the Equitable Building, in which were the offices of Pytchley and Culver. As that building had entrances on four streets, the best he could do was to walk round and round, with an occasional excursion through the corridors and past the elevators. He had written her, asking to see her; he had got no answer. He ceased to wait at the elevators after he had twice narrowly escaped being seen by Tetlow. He was indifferent to Tetlow, except as meeting him might make it harder to see Dorothy. He drank hard. But drink never affected him except to make him more grimly tenacious in whatever he had deliberately and soberly resolved. Drink did not explain—neither wholly nor in any part—this conduct of his. It, and the more erratic vagaries to follow, will seem incredible conduct for a man of Norman's character and position to feeble folk with their feeble desires, their dread of criticism and ridicule, their exaggerated and adoring notions of the master men. In fact, it was the natural outcome of the man's nature—arrogant, contemptuous of his fellowmen and of their opinions, and, like all the master men, capable of such concentration upon a desire that he would adopt any means, high or low, dignified or the reverse, if only it promised to further his end. Fred Norman, at these vulgar vigils, took the measure of his own self-abasement to a hair's breadth. But he kept on, with the fever of

his infatuation burning like a delirium, burning higher and deeper with each baffled day.

At noon, one day, as he swung into Broadway from Cedar street, he ran straight into Tetlow. It was raining and his umbrella caught in Tetlow's. It was a ludicrous situation, but there was no answering smile in his former friend's eyes. Tetlow glowered.

"I've heard you were hanging about," he said. "How low you have sunk!"

Norman laughed in his face. "Poor Tetlow," he said. "I never expected to see you develop into a crusader. And what a Don Quixote you look. Cheer up, old man. Don't take it so hard."

"I warn you to keep away from her," said Tetlow in subdued, tense tones, his fat face quivering with emotion. "Hasn't she shown you plainly that she'll have nothing to do with you?"

"I want only five minutes' talk with her, Tetlow," said Norman, dropping into an almost pleading tone. "And I guarantee I'll say nothing you wouldn't approve, if you heard. You are advising her badly. You are doing her an injury."

"I am protecting her from a scoundrel," retorted Tetlow.

"She'll not thank you for it, when she finds out the truth."

"You can write to her. What a shallow liar you are!"

"I cannot write what I must say," said Norman. It had never been difficult for him, however provoked, to keep his temper—outwardly. Tetlow's insults were to him no more than the barkings of a watch dog, and one not at all dangerous, but only amusing. "I must see her. If you are her friend, and not merely a jealous, disappointed lover, you'll advise her to see me."

"You shall not see her, if I can help it," cried his former friend. "And if you persist in annoying her——"

"Don't make futile threats, Tetlow," Norman interrupted. "You've done me all the mischief you can do. I see you hate me for the injuries you've done me. That's the way it always is. But I don't hate you. It was at my suggestion that the Lockyer firm is trying to get you back as a partner." Then, as Tetlow colored—"Oh, I see you're accepting their offer."

"If I had thought——"

"Nonsense. You're not a fool. How does it matter whose the hand, if only it's a helping hand? And you may be sure they'd never have made you the offer if they didn't need you badly. All the credit I claim is having the intelligence to enlighten their stupidity with the right suggestion."

In spite of himself Tetlow was falling under the spell of Norman's personality, of the old and deep admiration the lesser man had for the greater.

"Norman," he said, "how can you be such a com-

bination of bigness and petty deviltry? You are a monster of self-indulgence. It's a God's mercy there aren't more men with your selfishness and your desires."

Norman laughed sardonically. "The difference between me and most men," said he, "isn't in selfishness or in desires, but in courage. Courage, Billy—there's what most of you lack. And even in courage I'm not alone. My sort fill most of the high places."

Tetlow looked dismal confession of a fear that Norman was right.

"Yes," pursued Norman, "in this country there are enough wolves to attend to pretty nearly all the sheep—though it's amazing how much mutton there is." With an abrupt shift from raillery, "You'll help me with her, Billy?"

"Why don't you let her alone, Fred?" pleaded Tetlow. "It isn't worthy of you—a big man like you. Let her alone, Fred!—the poor child, trying to earn her own living in an honest way."

"Let her alone? Tetlow, I shall never let her alone—as long as she and I are both alive."

The fat man, with his premature wrinkles and his solemn air of law books that look venerable though fresh from the press, took on an added pastiness. "Fred—for God's sake, can't you love her in a noble way—a way worthy of you?"

Norman gave him a penetrating glance. "Is love—such love as mine—*and* yours—" There Tetlow flushed

guiltily—" is it ever noble?—whatever that means. No, it's human—human. But I'm not trying to harm her. I give you my word. . . . Will you help me—and her? "

Tetlow hesitated. His heavy cheeks quivered. " I don't trust you," he cried violently—the violence of a man fighting against an enemy within. " Don't ever speak to me again." And he rushed away through the rain, knocking umbrellas this way and that.

About noon two days later, as Norman was making one of his excursions past the Equitable elevators, he saw Bob Culver at the news stand. It so happened that as he recognized Culver, Culver cast in the direction of the elevators the sort of look that betrays a man waiting for a woman. Unseen by Culver, Norman stopped short. Into his face blazed the fury of suspicion, jealousy, and hate—one of the cyclones of passion that swept him from time to time and revealed to his own appalled self the full intensity of his feeling, the full power of the demon that possessed him. Culver was of those glossy, black men who are beloved of women. He was much handsomer than Norman, who, indeed, was not handsome at all, but was regarded as handsome because he had the air of great distinction. Many times these two young men had been pitted against each other in legal battles. Every time Norman had won. Twice they had contended for the favor of the same lady. Each had scored once. But as Culver's victory was merely for a very light and empty-headed lady of the stage while he

had won Josephine Burroughs away from Culver, the balance was certainly not against him.

As Norman slipped back and into the cross corridor to avoid meeting Culver, Dorothy Hallowell hurried from a just descended elevator and, with a quick, frightened glance toward Culver, in profile, almost ran toward Norman. It was evident that she had only one thought —to escape being seen by her new employer. When she realized that some one was standing before her and moved to one side to pass, she looked up. "Oh!" she gasped, starting back. And then she stood there white and shaking.

"Is that beast Culver hounding you?" demanded Norman.

She recovered herself quickly. With flashing eyes, she cried: "How dare you! How dare you!"

Norman, possessed by his rage against Culver, paid no attention. "If he don't let you alone," he said, "I'll thrash him into a hospital for six months. You must leave his office at once. You'll not go back there."

"You must be crazy," replied she, calm again. "I've no complaint to make of the way I'm being treated. I never was so well off in my life. And Mr. Culver is very kind and polite."

"You know what that means," said Norman harshly.

"Everyone isn't like you," retorted she.

He was examining her from head to foot, as if to make sure that it was she with no charm missing. He

noted that she was much less poorly dressed than when she worked for his firm. In those days she often looked dowdy, showed plainly the girl who has to make a hasty toilet in a small bedroom, with tiny wash-stand and looking-glass, in the early, coldest hours of a cold morning. Now she looked well taken care of physically, not so well, not anything like so well as the women uptown—the ladies with nothing to do but make toilettes; still, unusually well looked after for a working girl. At first glance after those famished and ravening days of longing for her and seeking her, she before him in rather dim reality of the obvious office-girl, seemed disappointing. It could not be that this insignificance was the cause of all his fever and turmoil. He began to hope that he was recovering, that the cloud of insane desire was clearing from his sky. But a second glance killed that hope. For, once more he saw her mystery, her beauties that revealed their perfection and splendor only to the observant.

While he looked she was regaining her balance, as the fading color in her white skin and the subsidence of the excitement in her eyes evidenced. "Let me pass, please," she said coldly—for, she was against the wall with him standing before her in such a way that she could not go until he moved aside.

"We'll lunch together," he said. "I want to talk with you. Did that well-meaning ass—Tetlow—tell you?"

"There is nothing you can say that I wish to hear," was her quiet reply.

"Your eyes—the edges of the lids are red. You have been crying?"

She lifted her glance to his and he had the sense of a veil drawing aside to reveal a desolation. "For my father," she said.

His face flushed. He looked steadily at her. "Now that he is gone, you have no one to protect you. I am——"

"I need no one," said she with a faintly contemptuous smile.

"You do need some one—and I am going to undertake it."

Her face lighted up. He thought it was because of what he had said. But she immediately undeceived him. She said in a tone of delighted relief, "Here comes Mr. Tetlow. You must excuse me."

"Dorothy—listen!" he cried. "We are going to be married at once."

The words exploded dizzily in his ears. He assumed they would have a far more powerful effect upon her. But her expression did not change. "No," she said hastily. "I must go with Mr. Tetlow." Tetlow was now at hand, his heavy face almost formidable in its dark ferocity. She said to him: "I was waiting for you. Come on."

Norman turned eagerly to his former friend. He

said: "Tetlow, I have just asked Miss Hallowell to be my wife."

Tetlow stared. Then pain and despair seemed to flood and ravage his whole body.

"I told you the other day," Norman went on, "that I was ready to do the fair thing. I have just been saying to Miss Hallowell that she must have some one to protect her. You agree with me, don't you?"

Tetlow, fumbling vaguely with his watch chain, gazed straight ahead. "Yes," he said with an effort. "Yes, you are right, Norman. An office is no place for an attractive girl as young as she is."

"Has Culver been annoying her?" inquired Norman.

Tetlow started. "Ah—she's told you—has she? I rather hoped she hadn't noticed or understood."

Both men now looked at the girl. She had shrunk into herself until she was almost as dim and unimpressive, as cipher-like as when Norman first beheld her. Also she seemed at least five years less than her twenty. "Dorothy," said Norman, "you will let me take care of you—won't you?"

"No," she said—and the word carried all the quiet force she was somehow able to put into her short, direct answers.

Tetlow's pasty sallowness took on a dark red tinge. He looked at her in surprise. "You don't understand, Miss Dorothy," he said. "He wants to marry you."

"I understand perfectly," replied she, with the far-away look in her blue eyes. "But I'll not marry him. I despise him. He frightens me. He sickens me."

Norman clinched his hands and the muscles of his jaw in the effort to control himself. "Dorothy," he said, "I've not acted as I should. Tetlow will tell you that there is good excuse for me. I know you don't understand about those things—about the ways of the world——"

"I understand perfectly," she interrupted. "It's you that don't understand. I never saw anyone so conceited. Haven't I told you I don't love you, and don't want anything to do with you?"

Tetlow, lover though he was—or perhaps because he was lover, of the hopeless kind that loves generously—could not refrain from protest. The girl was flinging away a dazzling future. It wasn't fair to her to let her do it when if she appreciated she would be overwhelmed with joy and gratitude. "I believe you ought to listen to Norman, Miss Dorothy," he said pleadingly. "At any rate, think it over—don't answer right away. He is making you an honorable proposal—one that's advantageous in every way——"

Dorothy regarded him with innocent eyes, wide and wondering. "I didn't think you could talk like that, Mr. Tetlow!" she exclaimed. "You heard what I said to him—about the way I felt. How could I be his wife? He tried everything else—and, now, though he's ashamed

of it, he's trying to get me by marriage. Oh, I understand. I wish I didn't. I'd not feel so low." She looked at Norman. "Can't you realize *ever* that I don't want any of the grand things you're so crazy about—that I want something very different—something *you* could never give me—or get for me?"

"Isn't there anything I can do, Dorothy, to make you forget and forgive?" he cried, like a boy, an infatuated boy. "For God's sake, Tetlow, help me! Tell her I'm not so rotten as she thinks. I'll be anything you like, my darling—*anything*—if only you'll take me. For I must have you. You're the only thing in the world I care for—and, without you, I've no interest in life—none—none!"

He was so impassioned that passersby began to observe them curiously. Tetlow became uneasy. But Norman and Dorothy were unconscious of what was going on around them. The energy of his passion compelled her, though the passion itself was unwelcome. "I'm sorry," she said gently. "Though you would have hurt me, if you could, I don't want to hurt you. . . . I'm sorry. I can't love you. . . . I'm sorry. Come on, Mr. Tetlow."

Norman stood aside. She and Tetlow went on out of the building. He remained in the same place, oblivious of the crowd streaming by, each man or woman with a glance at his vacant stare.

XIV

Than Fred Norman no man ever had better reason to feel securely entrenched upon the heights of success. It was no silly vaunt of optimism for him to tell Lockyer that only loss of life or loss of mind could dislodge him. And a few days after Dorothy had extinguished the last spark of hope he got ready to pull himself together and show the world that it was indulging too soon in its hypocritical headshakings over his ruin.

"I am going to open an office of my own at once," he said to his sister.

She did not wish to discourage him, but she could not altogether keep her thoughts from her face. She had, in a general way, a clear idea of the complete system of tollgates, duly equipped with strong barriers, which the mighty few have established across practically all the highroads to material success. Also, she felt in her brother's manner and tone a certain profound discouragement, a lack of the unconquerable spirit which had carried him so far so speedily. It is not a baseless notion that the man who has never been beaten is often destroyed by his first reverse. Ursula feared the spell of success had been broken for him.

"You mean," she suggested, with apparent carelessness, "that you will give up your forty thousand a year?"

He made a disdainful gesture. "I can make more than that," said he. "It's a second rate lawyer who can't in this day."

"Of course you can," replied she tactfully. "But why not take a rest first? Then there's old Burroughs —on the war path. Wouldn't it be wise to wait till he calms down?"

"If Burroughs or any other man is necessary to me," rejoined Fred, "the sooner I find it out the better. I ought to know just where I—I myself—stand."

"No one is necessary to you but yourself," said Ursula, proudly and sincerely. "But, Fred— Are you yourself just now?"

"No, I'm not," admitted he. "But the way to become so again isn't by waiting but by working." An expression of sheer wretchedness came into his listless, heavy eyes. "Urse, I've got to conquer my weakness now, or go under."

She was eager to hold on to the secure forty thousand a year—for his sake no less than for her own. She argued with him with all the adroitness of a mind as good in its way as his own. But she could not shake his resolution. And she in prudence, desisted when he said bitterly: "I see you've lost confidence in me. Well, I don't blame you. . . . So have I." Then after

a moment, violently rather than strongly: "But I've got to get it back. If I don't I'm only putting off the smash—a complete smash."

"I don't see quite how it's to be arranged," said she, red and hesitating. For, she feared he would think her altogether selfish in her anxiety. He certainly would have been justified in so thinking; he knew how rarely generosity survived in the woman who leads the soft and idle life.

"How long can we keep on as we're living now—if there's nothing, or little, coming in?"

"I don't know," confessed she. She was as poor at finance as he, and had certainly not been improved by his habit of giving her whatever she happened to think was necessary. "I can't say. Perhaps a few months—I don't know— Not long, I'm afraid."

"Six months?"

"Oh, no. You see—the fact is—I've been rather careless about the bills. You're so generous, Fred—and one is so busy in New York. I guess we owe a good deal—here and there and yonder. And—the last few days some of the tradespeople have been pressing for payment."

"You see!" exclaimed he. "The report is going round that I'm ruined and done for. I've simply got to make good. If you can't keep up a front, shut up the house and go abroad. You can stay till I've got my foot back on its neck."

She believed in him, at bottom. She could not conceive how appearances and her forebodings could be true. Such strength as his could not be overwhelmed thus suddenly. And by so slight a thing!—by an unsatisfied passion for a woman, and an insignificant woman, at that. For, like all women, like all the world for that matter, she measured a passion by the woman who was the object of it, instead of by the man who fabricated it. "Yes—I'll go abroad," said she, hopefully.

"Quietly arrange for a long stay," he advised. "I *hope* it won't be long. But I never plan on hope."

Thus, with his sister and Fitzhugh out of the way and the heaviest of his burdens of expense greatly lightened, he set about rehabitating himself. He took an office, waited for clients. And clients came—excellent clients. Came and precipitately left him.

There were two reasons for it. The first—the one most often heard—was the story going round that he had been, and probably still was, out of his mind. No deadlier or crueler weapon can be used against a man than that same charge as to his sanity. It has been known to destroy, or seriously maim, brilliant and able men with no trace of any of the untrustworthy kinds of insanity. Where the man's own conduct gives color to the report, the attack is usually mortal. And Norman had acted the crazy man. The second reason was the hostility of Burroughs, reinforced by all the hatreds

and jealousies Norman's not too respectful way of dealing with his fellow men had been creating through fifteen years.

The worst moment in the life of a man who has always proudly regarded himself as above any need whatever from his fellow men is when he discovers all in a flash, that the timid animal he spurned as it fawned has him upon his back, has its teeth and claws at his helpless throat.

For four months he stood out against the isolation, the suspicion as to his sanity, the patronizing pity of men who but a little while before had felt honored when he spoke to them. For four months he gave battle to unseen and silent foes compassing him on every side. He had no spirit for the fight; his love of Dorothy Hallowell and his complete rout there had taken the spirit out of him—and with it had gone that confidence in himself and in his luck which had won him so many critical battles. Then— He had been keeping up a large suite of offices, a staff of clerks and stenographers and all the paraphernalia of the great and successful lawyer. He had been spreading out the little business he got in a not unsuccessful effort to make it appear big and growing. He now gave up these offices and the costly pride, pomp and circumstance—left with several thousand dollars owing. He took two small rooms in a building tenanted by beginners and cheap shysters. He continued to live at his club, where even the servants

were subtly insolent to him; he could see the time approaching when he might have to let himself be dropped for failing to pay dues and bills.

He stared at his ruin in stupid and dazed amazement. Usually, to hear or to read about such a catastrophe as this is to get a vague, rather impressive notion of something picturesque and romantic. Ruined, like all the big fateful words, has a dignified sound. But the historians and novelists and poets and other keepers of human records have a pleasant, but not very honest way, of omitting practically all the essentials from their records and substituting glittering imaginings that delight the reader—and wofully mislead him as to the truth about life. What wonder that we learn slowly—and improve slowly. How wofully we have been, and are, misled by all upon whom we have relied as teachers.

Already one of these charming tales of majestic downfall was in process of manufacture, with Frederick Norman as the central figure. It was only awaiting his suicide or some other mode of complete submergence for its final glose of glamor. In this manufacture, the truth, as usual, had been almost omitted; such truth as was retained for this artistic version of a human happening was so perverted that it was falser than the simon pure fictions with which it was interwoven. Just as the literal truth about his success was far from being altogether to his credit, so the literal truth as to his fall

gave him little of the vesture of the hero, and that little ill fitting, to cover his naked humanness. Let him who has risen to material success altogether by methods approved by the idealists, let him who has fallen from on high with graceful majesty, without hysterical clutchings and desperate attempts at self-salvation in disregard of the safety of others—let either of these superhuman beings come forward with the first stone for Norman.

Those at some distance from the falling man could afford to be romantic and piteous over his fate. Those in his dangerous neighborhood were too busy getting out of the way. "Man falling—stand from under!" was the cry—how familiar it is!—and acquaintances and friends fled in mad skedaddle. He would surely be asking favors—would be trying to borrow money. It is no peculiarity of rats to desert a sinking ship; it is simply an inevitable precaution in a social system modeled as yet upon nature's cruel law of the survival of the fittest. A falling man is first of all a warning to all other men high enough up to be able to fall—a warning to them to take care lest they fall also where footing is so insecure and precipices and steeps beset every path.

Norman, falling, falling, gazed round him and up and down, in dazed wonder. He had seen many others fall. He had seen just where and just why they missed their footing. And he had been confident that with him

no such misstep was possible. He could not believe; a little while, and luck would turn, and up he would go again—higher than before. Many a lawyer—to look no farther than his own profession—had through recklessness or pride or inadvertence got the big men down on him. But after a time they had relented or had found an exact use for him; and fall had been succeeded by rise. Was there a single instance where a man of good brain had been permanently downed? No, not one. Stay— Some of these unfortunates had failed to reappear on the heights of success. Yes, thinking of the matter, he recalled several such. Had he been altogether right in assuming, in his days of confidence and success, that they stayed down because they belonged down? Perhaps he had judged them harshly? Yes, he was sure he had judged them harshly. There was such a thing as breaking a proud spirit—and he found within himself apparent proof that precisely this calamity had befallen him.

There came a time—and it came soon—when he had about exhausted his desperate ingenuity at cornering acquaintances and former friends and "sticking them up" for loans of five hundred, a hundred, fifty, twenty-five— Because these vulgar and repulsive facts are not found in the usual records of the men who have dropped and come up again, do not imagine that only the hopeless and never-reappearing failures pass through such experiences. On the contrary, they are part of the

common human lot, and few indeed are the men who have not had them—and worse—if they could but be brought to tell the truth. Destiny rarely permits any one of us to go from cradle to grave without doing many a thing shameful and universally condemned. How could it be otherwise under our social system? When Norman was about at the end of all his resources Tetlow called on him—Tetlow, now a partner in the Lockyer firm.

He came with an air of stealth. "I don't want anyone to know I'm doing this," said he frankly. "If it got out, I'd be damaged and you'd not profit."

Rarely does anyone, however unworthy— and Fred Norman was far from unworthy, as we humans go—rarely does anyone find himself absolutely without a friend. There is a saying that no man ever sunk so low, ever became so vile and squalid in soul and body, but that if he were dying, and the fact were noised throughout the world, some woman somewhere would come—perhaps from a sense of duty, perhaps from love, perhaps for the sake of a moment of happiness long past but never equaled, and so never forgotten—but from whatever motive, she would come. In the same manner, anyone in dire straits can be sure of some friend. There were several others whom Norman had been expecting—men he had saved by his legal ingenuity at turning points in their careers. None of these was so imprudent as uselessly to involve himself.

It was Tetlow who came—Tetlow, with whom his accounts were more than balanced, with the balance against him. Tetlow, whom he did not expect.

Norman did not welcome him effusively. He said at once: "How is—she?"

Tetlow shifted uneasily. "I don't know. She's not with us. I gave her a place there—to get her away from Culver. But she didn't stay long. No doubt she's doing well."

"I thought you cared about her," said Norman, who in estimating Tetlow's passion had measured it by his own, had neglected to consider that the desires of most men soon grow short of breath and weary of leg.

"Yes—so I did care for her," said Tetlow, in the voice of a man who has been ill but is now well. "But that's all over. Women aren't worth bothering about much. They're largely vanity. The way they soon take a man for granted if he's at all kind to them discourages any but the poorest sort of fool. At least that's my opinion."

"Then you don't come from her?" said Norman with complete loss of interest in his caller.

"No. I've come— Fred, I hear you're in difficulties."

Norman's now deep-set eyes gleamed humorously in his haggard and failed-looking face. "*In* difficulties? Not at all. I'm *under* them—drowned forty fathoms deep."

"Then you'll not resent my coming straight to the point and asking if I can help you?"

"That's a rash offer, Tetlow. I never suspected rashness was one of your qualities."

"I don't mean to offer you a loan or anything of that sort," pursued Tetlow. "There's only one thing that can help a man in your position. He must either be saved outright or left to drown. I've come with something that may save you."

There was so much of the incongruous in a situation where *he* was listening to an offer of salvation from such a man as Billy Tetlow that Norman smiled. "Well, what is it?" he said.

"There's a chance that within six months or so—perhaps sooner—Burroughs and Galloway may end their truce and declare war on each other. If so, Galloway will win. Anyhow, the Galloway connection would be better than the Burroughs connection."

Norman looked at Tetlow shrewdly. "How do you know this?" he asked.

Tetlow's eyes shifted. "Can't tell you. But I know."

"Galloway hates me."

Tetlow nodded. "You were the one who forced him into a position where he had to make peace with Burroughs. But Galloway's a big man, big enough to admire ability wherever he sees it. He has admired you ever since."

"And has given his business to another firm."

"But if the break comes he'll need you. And he's the sort of man who doesn't hesitate to take what he needs."

"Too remote," said Norman, and his despondent gesture showed how quickly hope had lighted up. "Besides, Billy, I've lost my nerve. I'm no good."

"But you've gotten over that—that attack of insanity."

Norman shook his head.

"I can't understand it," ejaculated Tetlow.

"Of course you can't," said Norman. "But—there it is."

"You haven't seen her lately?"

"Not since that day . . . Billy, she hasn't—" Norman stopped, and Tetlow saw that his hands were trembling with agitation, and marveled.

"Oh, no," replied Tetlow. "So far as I know, she's still respectable. But—why don't you go to see her? I think you'd be cured."

"Why do you say that?" demanded Norman, the veins in his forehead bulging with the fury he was ready to release.

"For no especial reason—on my honor, Fred," replied Tetlow. "Simply because time works wonders in all sorts of ways, including infatuations. Also—well, the fact is, it didn't seem to me that young lady improved on acquaintance. Maybe I got tired, or

piqued—I don't know. If she hadn't been a silly little fool, would she have refused you? I know it sounds well—in a novel or a play—for a poor girl to refuse a good offer, just from sentiment. But, all the same, only a fool girl does it—in life—eh? But go to see her. You'll understand what I mean, I think. I want you to brace up. That may help."

"What's she doing?"

"I don't know. I'll send you her address. I can get it. About Galloway— If that break comes, I propose that we get his business—you and I. I want you for a partner. I always did. I think I know how to get work out of you. I understand you better than anyone else. That's why I'm here."

"It's useless," said Norman.

"I'm willing to take the risk. Now, here's what I propose. I'll stake you to the extent of a thousand dollars a month for the next six months, you to keep on as you are and not to tie yourself up to any other lawyer, or to any client likely to hamper us if we get the Galloway business."

"I've been borrowing right and left——"

"I know about that," interrupted Tetlow. "I'm not interested. If you'll agree to my proposal, I'll take my chances."

"You are throwing away six thousand dollars."

"I owe you a position where I make five times that much."

Norman shrugged his shoulders. "Very well. Can I have five hundred at once?"

"I'll send you a check to-day. I'll send two checks a month—the first and the fifteenth."

"I am drinking a great deal."

"You always did."

"Not until recently. I never knew what drinking meant until these last few months."

"Well, do as you like with the money. Drink it all, if you please. I'm making no conditions beyond the two I stated."

"You will send me that address?"

"In the letter with the check."

"Will she see me, do you think?"

"I haven't an idea," replied Tetlow.

"What's the mystery?" asked Norman. "Why do you speak of her so indifferently?"

"It's the way I feel." Then, in answer to the unspoken suspicion once more appearing in Norman's eyes, he added: "She's a very nice, sweet girl, Norman —so far as I know or believe. Beyond that— Go to see her."

It had been many a week since Norman had heard a friendly voice. The very sound of the human voice had become hateful to him, because he was constantly detecting the note of nervousness, the scarcely concealed fear of being entangled in his misfortunes. As Tetlow rose to go, Norman tried to detain him. The sound of

an unconstrained voice, the sight of a believing face that did not express one or more of the shadings of contempt between pity and aversion—the sight and sound of this friend Tetlow was acting upon him like one of those secret, unexpected, powerful tonics which nature at times suddenly injects into a dying man to confound the doctors and cheat death.

"Tetlow," said he, "I'm down—probably down for good. But if I ever get up again, I'll not make one mistake—the one that cost me this fall. Do you know what that mistake was?"

"I suppose you mean Miss Hallowell?"

"No," said Norman, to his surprise. "I mean my lack of money, of capital, of a large and secure income. I used to imagine that brains were the best, the only sure asset. I was guilty of the stupidity of overvaluing my own possessions."

"Brains are a mighty good asset, Fred."

"Yes—and necessary. But a man of action must have under his brains another asset—*must* have it, Billy. The one secure asset is a big capital. Money rules this world. Some men have been lucky enough to rise and stay risen, without money. But not a man of all the men who have been knocked out could have been dislodged if he had been armed and armored with money. My prodigality was my fatal mistake. I shan't make it again—if I get the chance. You don't know, Tetlow, how hard it is to get money when you are

tumbling and must have it. I never dreamed what a factor it is in calamities of *every* sort. It's *the* factor."

"I don't like to hear you talk that way, Norman," said Tetlow earnestly. "I've always most admired in you the fact that you weren't mercenary."

"And I never shall be," said Norman, with the patient smile of a swift, keen mind at one that is slow and hard to make understand. "It isn't my nature. But, if I'm resurrected, I'll seem to be mercenary until I get a full suit of the only armor that's invulnerable in this world. Why, I built my fort like a fool. It was impregnable except for one thing—one obvious thing. It hadn't a supply of water. If I build again it'll be round a spring—an income big enough for my needs and beyond anybody's power to cut off."

Tetlow showed that he was much cheered by Norman's revived interest in life. But he went away uneasy; for the last thing Norman said to him was:

"Don't forget that address!"

XV

But it chanced that Norman met her in the street about an hour after Tetlow's call.

He was on the way to lunch at the Lawyer's Club —one of those apparent luxuries that are the dire and pitiful necessities of men in New York fighting to maintain the semblance and the reputation of prosperity. It must not be imagined by those who are here let into Norman's inmost secrets that his appearance betrayed the depth to which he had fallen. At least to the casual eye he seemed the same rich and powerful personage. An expert might have got at a good part of the truth from his somber eyes and haggard face, from the subtle transformation of the former look of serene pride into the bravado of pretense. And as, in a general way, the facts of his fall were known far and wide, all his acquaintances understood that his seeming of undiminished success was simply the familiar "bluff." Its advantage to him with them lay in its raising a doubt as to just what degree of disaster it hid—no small advantage. Nor was this "bluff" altogether for the benefit of the outside world. It made his fall less hideously intolerable to himself. In the bottom of his heart he

knew that when drink and no money should finally force him to release his relaxing hold upon his fashionable clubs, upon luxurious attire and habits, he would suddenly and with accelerated speed drop into the abyss— We have all caught glimpses of that abyss—frayed fine linen cheaply laundered, a tie of one time smartness showing signs of too long wear, a suit from the best kind of tailor with shiny spot glistening here, patch peeping there, a queer unkemptness about the hair and skin—these the beginnings of a road that leads straight and short to the barrel-house, the park bench, and the police station. Because, when a man strikes into that stretch of the road to perdition, he ceases to be one of our friends, passes from view entirely, we have the habit of *saying* that such things rarely if ever happen. But we *know* better. Many's the man now high who has had the sort of drop Norman was taking. We remember when he was making a bluff such as Norman was making in those days; but we think now that we were mistaken in having suspected it of being bluff.

Norman, dressed with more than ordinary care— how sensitive a man becomes about those things when there is neither rustle nor jingle in his pockets, and his smallest check would be returned with the big black stamp "No Funds"— Norman, groomed to the last button, was in Broadway near Rector Street. Ahead of him he saw the figure of a girl—a trim, attractive figure, slim and charmingly long of line. A second

glance, and he recognized her. What was the change that had prevented his recognizing her at once? He had not seen that particular lightish-blue dress before —nor the coquettish harmonizing hat. But that was not the reason. No, it was the coquetry in her toilet— the effort of the girl to draw attention to her charms by such small devices as are within the reach of extremely modest means. He did not like this change. It offended his taste; it alarmed his jealousy.

He quickened his step, and when almost at her side spoke her name—"Miss Hallowell."

She stopped, turned. As soon as she recognized him there came into her quiet, lovely face a delightful smile. He could not conceal his amazement. She was glad to see him! Instantly, following the invariable habit of an experienced analytical mind, he wondered for what unflattering reason this young woman who did not like him was no longer showing it, was seeming more than a little pleased to see him. "Why, how d'ye do, Mr. Norman?" said she. And her friendliness and assurance of manner jarred upon him. There was not a suggestion of forwardness; but he, used to her old-time extreme reserve, felt precisely as if she were bold and gaudy, after the fashion of so many of the working girls who were popular with the men.

This unfavorable impression disappeared—or, rather, retired to the background—even as it became definite. And once more he was seeing the charms of

physical loveliness, of physical—and moral, and mental—mystery that had a weird power over him. As they shook hands, a quiver shot through him as at the shock of a terrific stimulant; and he stood there longing to take her in his arms, to feel the delicate yet perfect and vividly vital life of that fascinating form—longing to kiss that sensitive, slightly pouted rosy mouth, to try to make those clear eyes grow soft and dreamy——

She was saying: "I've been wondering what had become of you."

"I saw Tetlow," he said. "He promised to send me your address."

At Tetlow's name she frowned slightly; then a gleam of ridicule flitted into her eyes. "Oh, that silly, squeamish old maid! How sick I got of him!"

Norman winced, and his jealousy stirred. "Why?" he asked.

"Always warning me against everybody. Always giving me advice. It was too tiresome. And at last he began to criticize me—the way I dressed—the way I talked—said I was getting too free in my manner. The impudence of him!"

Norman tried to smile.

"He'd have liked me to stay a silly little mouse forever."

"So you've been—blossoming out?" said Norman.

"In a quiet way," replied she, with a smile of self-

content, so lovely as a smile that no one would have minded its frank egotism. "There isn't much chance for fun—unless a girl goes too far. But at the same time I don't intend life to be Sunday when it isn't work. I got very cross with him—Mr. Tetlow, I mean. And I took another position. It didn't pay quite so well—only fifteen a week. But I couldn't stand being watched—and guyed by all the other girls and boys for it."

"Where are you working?"

"With an old lawyer named Branscombe. It's awful slow, as I'm the only one, and he's old and does everything in an old-fashioned way. But the hours are easy, and I don't have to get down till nine—which is nice when you've been out at a dance the night before."

Norman kept his eyes down to hide from her the legion of devils of jealousy. "You *have* changed," he said.

"I'm growing up," replied she with a charming toss of her small head—what beautiful effects the sunlight made in among those wavy strands and strays!

"And you're as lovely as ever—lovelier," he said—and his eyes were the eyes of the slave she had spurned.

She did not spurn him now—and it inflamed his jealousy that she did not. She said: "Oh, what's the good of looks? The town's full of pretty girls. And so many of them have money—which I haven't. To

make a hit in New York a girl's got to have both looks and dress. But I must be going. I've an engagement to lunch—" She gave a proud little smile—" at the Astor House. It's nice upstairs there."

" With Bob Culver? "

She laughed. " I haven't seen him since I left his office. You know, Mr. Tetlow took me with him—back to your old firm. I didn't like Mr. Culver. I don't care for those black men. They are bad-tempered and two-faced. Anyhow, I'd not have anything to do with a man who wanted to slip round with me as if he were ashamed of me."

She was looking at Norman pleasantly enough. He wasn't sure that the hit was for him as well as for Culver, but he flushed deeply. " Will you lunch with me at the Astor House at one to-morrow? "

" I've got an engagement," said she. " And I must be going. I'm awfully late." He had an instinct that her engagement on both days was with the same man. " I'm glad to have seen you——"

" Won't you let me call on you? " he said imploringly, but with the suggestion that he had no hope of being permitted to come.

" Certainly," responded she with friendly promptness. She opened the shopping bag swinging on her arm. " Here is one of my cards."

" When? This evening? "

Her laugh showed the beautiful deep pink and daz-

zling white behind her lips. "No—I'm going to a party."

"Let me take you."

She shook her head. "You wouldn't like it. Only young people."

"But I'm not so old."

She looked at him critically. "No—you're not. It always puzzled me. You aren't old—you look like a boy lots of the time. But you always *seem* old to me."

"I'll try to do better. To-night?"

"Not to-night," laughed she. "Let's see—to-morrow's Sunday. Come to-morrow—about half past two."

"Thank you," he said so gratefully that he cursed himself for his folly as he heard his voice—the idiotic folly of so plainly betraying his feelings. No wonder she despised him! Beginning again—and beginning wrong.

"Good-by." Her eyes, her smile flashed and he was alone, watching her slender grace glide through the throngs of lower Broadway.

At his office again at three, he found a note from Tetlow inclosing another of Dorothy's cards and also the promised check. Into his face came the look that always comes into the faces of the prisoners of despair when the bolts slide back and the heavy door swings and hope stands on the threshold instead of the famil-

iar grim figure of the jailer. "This looks like the turn of the road," he muttered. Yes, a turn it certainly was—but was it *the* turn? "I'll know more as to that," said he with a glance at the clock, "about this time to-morrow."

It was a boarding house on the west side. And when the slovenly, smelly maid said, "Go right up to her room," he knew it was—probably respectable, but not rigidly respectable. However, working girls must receive, and they cannot afford parlors and chaperons. Still— It was no place for a lovely young girl, full of charm and of love of life—and not brought up in the class where the women are trained from babyhood to protect themselves.

He ascended two flights, knocked at the door to the rear. "Come!" called a voice, and he entered. It was a small neat room, arranged comfortably and with some taste. He recognized at first glance many little things from her room in the Jersey City house—things he had provided for her. On the chimney piece was a large photograph of her father—Norman's eyes hastily shifted from that. The bed was folded away into a couch—for space and for respectability. At first he did not see her. But when he advanced a step farther, she was disclosed in the doorway of a deep closet that contained a stationary washstand.

He had never seen her when she was not fully

dressed. He was now seeing her in a kind of wrapper —of pale blue, clean but not fresh. It was open at the throat; its sleeves fell away from her arms. And, to cap the climax of his agitation, her hair, her wonderful hair, was flowing loosely about her face and shoulders.

"What's the matter with you?" she cried laughingly. Her eyes sparkled and danced; the waves of her hair, each hair standing out as if it were alive, sparkled and danced. It was a smile never to be forgotten. "Why are you so embarrassed?"

He was embarrassed. He was thrilled. He was enraged—enraged because, if she would thus receive him whom she did not like, she would certainly thus receive any man.

"I don't mind you," she went on, mockingly. "I'd have to be careful if it was one of the boys."

"Do you receive the—boys—here?" demanded he glumly, his voice arrogant with the possessive rights a man feels when he cares for a woman, whether she cares for him or not.

"Why not?" scoffed she. "Where else would I see them? I don't make street corner dates, thank you. You're as bad as fat, foolish Mr. Tetlow."

"I beg your pardon," said he humbly.

She straightway relented, saying: "Of course I'd not let one of the boys come up when I was dressed like this. But I didn't mind *you*." He winced at this amiable, unconscious reminder of her always exasperating

and tantalizing and humiliating indifference to him—"And as I'm going to a grand dance to-night I simply had to wash my hair. Does that satisfy you, Mr. Primmey?"

He hid the torment of his reopened wound and seated himself at the center table. She returned to a chair in the window where the full force of the afternoon sun would concentrate upon her hair. And he gazed spell bound. He had always known that her hair was fine. He had never dreamed it was like this. It was thick, it was fine and soft. In color, as the sunbeams streamed upon it, it was all the shades of gold and all the other beautiful shades between brown and red. It fell about her face, about her neck, about her shoulders in a gorgeous veil. And her pure white skin— It was an even more wonderful white below the line of her collar—where he had never seen it before. Such exquisitely modeled ears—such a delicate nose—and the curve of her cheeks—and the glory of her eyes! He clinched his teeth and his hands, sat dumb with his gaze down.

"How do you like my room?" she chattered on. "It's not so bad—really quite comfortable—though I'm afraid I'll be cold when the weather changes. But it's the best I can do. As it is, I don't see how I'm going to make ends meet. I pay twelve of my fifteen for this room and two meals. The rest goes for lunch and car fare. As soon as I have to get clothes—" She broke off, laughing.

"Well," he said, "what then?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied she carelessly. "Perhaps old Mr. Branscombe'll give me a raise. Still, eighteen or twenty is the most I could hope for—and that wouldn't mean enough for clothes."

She shook her head vigorously and her hair stood out yet more vividly and the sunbeams seemed to go mad with joy as they danced over and under and through it. He had ventured to glance up; again he hastily looked down.

"You spoiled me," she went on. "Those few months over there in Jersey City. It made *such* a change in me, though I didn't realize it at the time. You see, I hadn't known since I was a tiny little girl what it was to live really decently, and so I was able to get along quite contentedly. I didn't know any better." She made a wry face. "How I loathe the canned and cold storage stuff I have to eat nowadays. And how I do miss the beautiful room I had in that big house over there! and how I miss Molly and Pat—and the garden—and doing as I pleased—and the clothes I had! I thought I was being careful and not spoiling myself. You may not believe it, but I was really conscientious about spending money." She laughed in a queer, absent way. "I had such a funny idea of what I had a right to do and what I hadn't. And I didn't spend so very much on out-and-out luxury. But—enough to spoil me for this life."

As Norman listened, as he noted—in her appearance, manner, way of talking—the many meaning signs of the girl hesitating at the fork of the roads—he felt within him the twinges of fear, of jealousy—and through fear and jealousy, the twinges of conscience. She was telling the truth. He had undermined her ability to live in purity the life to which her earning power assigned her. . . . *Why* had she been so friendly to him? Why had she received him in this informal, almost if not quite inviting fashion?

"So you think I've changed?" she was saying. "Well—I have. Gracious, what a little fool I was!"

His eyes lifted with an agonized question in them.

She flushed, glanced away, glanced at him again with the old, sweet expression of childlike innocence which had so often made him wonder whether it was merely a mannerism, or was a trick, or was indeed a beam from a pure soul. "I'm foolish still—in certain ways," she said significantly.

"And you always intend to be?" suggested he with a forced smile.

"Oh—yes," replied she—positively enough, yet it somehow had not the full force of her simple short statements in the former days.

He believed her. Perhaps because he wished to believe, must believe, would have been driven quite mad by disbelief. Still, he believed. As yet she was good. But it would not last much longer. With him—or

with some other. If with him, then certainly afterward with another—with others. No matter how jealously he might guard her, she would go that road, if once she entered it. If he would have her for his very own he must strengthen her, not weaken her, must keep her "foolish still—in certain ways."

He said: "There's nothing in the other sort of life."

"That's what they say," replied she, with ominous irritation. "Still—some girls—*lots* of girls seem to get on mighty well without being so terribly particular."

"You ought to see them after a few years."

"I'm only twenty-one," laughed she. "I've got lots of time before I'm old. . . . You haven't—married?"

"No," said he.

"I thought I'd have heard, if you had." She laughed queerly—again shook out her hair, and it shimmered round her face and over her head and out from her shoulders like flames. "You've got a kind of a—Mr. Tetlow way of talking. It doesn't remind me of you as you were in Jersey City."

She said nothing, she suggested nothing that had the least impropriety in it, or faintest hint of impropriety. It was nothing positive, nothing aggressive, but a certain vague negative something that gave him the impression of innocence still innocent but looking or trying to look tolerantly where it should not. And he felt dizzy and sick, stricken with shame and remorse

—and jealous fear. Yes—she was sliding slowly, gently, unconsciously down to the depth in which he had been lying, sick and shuddering—no, to deeper depths—to the depths where there is no light, no trace of a return path. And he had started her down. He had done it when he, in his pride and selfishness, had ignored what the success of his project would mean for her. But he knew now; in bitterness and shame and degradation he had learned. "I was infamous!" he said to himself.

She began to talk in a low, embarrassed voice: "Sometimes I think of getting married. There's a young man—a young lawyer—he makes twenty-five a week, but it'll be years and years before he has a good living. A man doesn't get on fast in New York unless he has pull."

Norman, roused from his remorse, blazed inside. "You are in love with him?"

She laughed, and he could not tell whether it was to tease him or to evade.

"You'd not care about him long," said Norman, "unless there were more money coming in than he'd be likely to get soon. Love without money doesn't go —at least, not in New York."

"Do you suppose I don't know that?" said she with the irritation of one faced by a hateful fact. "Still—I don't see what to do."

Norman, biting his lip and fuming and observing

her with jealous eyes, said in the best voice he could command, "How long have you been in love with him?"

"Did I say I was in love?" mocked she.

"You didn't say you weren't. Who is he?"

"If you'll stay on about half an hour or so, you'll see him. No—you can't. I've got to get dressed before I let him up. He has very strict ideas—where I'm concerned."

"Then why did you let *me* come up?" Norman said, with a penetrating glance.

She lowered her gaze and a faint flush stole into her cheeks. Was it confession of the purpose he suspected? Or, was it merely embarrassment?

"I heard of a case once," continued Norman, his gaze significantly direct, "the case of a girl who was in love with a poor young fellow. She wanted money —luxury. Also, she wanted the poor young fellow."

The color flamed into the girl's face, then left it pale. Her white fingers fluttered with nervous grace into her masses of hair and back to her lap again, to rest there in timid quiet.

"She knew another man," pursued Norman, "one who was able to give her what she wanted in the way of comfort. So, she decided to make an arrangement with the man, and keep it hidden from her lover—and in that way get along pleasantly until her lover was in better circumstances."

Her gaze was upon her hands, listless in her lap. He

felt that he had spoken her unspoken, probably unformed thoughts. Yes, unformed. Men and women, especially women, habitually pursued these unacknowledged and even unformed purposes, in their conflicts of the desire to get what they wanted and their desire to appear well to themselves.

"What would you think of an arrangement like that?" asked he, determined to draw her secret heart into the open where he could see, where she could see.

She lifted frank, guileless eyes to his. "I suppose the girl was trying to do the best she could."

"What do you think of a girl who'd do that?"

"I don't judge anybody—any more. I've found out that this world isn't at all as I thought—as I was taught."

"Would *you* do it?"

She smiled faintly. "No," she replied uncertainly. Then she restored his wavering belief in her essential honesty and truthfulness by adding: "That is to say, I don't think I would."

She busied herself with her hair, feeling it to see whether it was not yet dry, spreading it out. He looked at her unseeingly. At last she said: "You must go. I've got to get dressed."

"Yes—I must be going," said he absently, rising and reaching for his hat on the center table.

She stood up, put out her hand. "I'm glad you came."

"Thank you," said he, still in the same abstraction. He shook hands with her, moved hesitatingly toward the door. With his hand on the knob he turned and glanced keenly at her. He surprised in her face a look of mystery—of seriousness, of sadness—was there anxiety in it, also? And then he saw a certain elusive reminder of her father—and it brought to him with curious force the memory of how she had been brought up, of what must be hers by inheritance and by training—she, the daughter of a great and simple and noble man—

"You'll come again?" she said, and there was the note in her voice that made his nerves grow tense and vibrate.

But he seemed not to have heard her question. Still at the unopened door, he folded his arms upon his chest and said, speaking rapidly yet with the deliberation of one who has thought out his words in advance:

"I don't know what kind of girl you are. I never have known. I've never wanted to know. If you told me you were—what is called good, I'd doubt it. If you told me you weren't, I'd want to kill you and myself. They say there's a fatal woman for every man and a fatal man for every woman. I always laughed at the idea—until you. I don't know what to make of myself."

She suddenly laid her finger on her lips. It irritated him, to discover that, as he talked, speaking the things that came from the very depths of his soul, she had been giving him only part of her attention, had been listening

for a step on the stairs. He was hearing the ascending step now. He frowned. "Can't you send him away?" he asked.

"I must," said she in a low tone. "It wouldn't do for him to know you were here. He has strict ideas—and is terribly jealous."

A few seconds of silence, then a knock on the other side of the door.

"Who's there?" she called.

"I'm a little early," came in an agreeable, young man's voice. "Aren't you ready?"

"Not nearly," replied she, in a laughing, innocent voice. "You'll have to go away for half an hour."

"I'll wait out here on the steps."

Her eyes were sparkling. A delicate color had mounted to her skin. Norman, watching her jealously, clinched his strong jaws. She said: "No—you must go clear away. I don't want to feel that I'm being hurried. Don't come back until a quarter past four."

"All right. I'm crazy to see you." This in the voice of a lover. She smiled radiantly at Norman, as if she thought he would share in her happiness at these evidences of her being well loved. The unseen young man said: "Exactly a quarter past. What time does your clock say it is now?"

"A quarter to," replied she.

"That's what my watch says. So there'll be no mistake. For half an hour—good-by!"

"Half an hour!" she called.

She and Norman stood in silence until the footsteps died away. Then she said crossly to Norman: "You ought to have gone before. I don't like to do these things."

"You do them well," said he, with a savage gleam.

She was prompt and sure with his punishment. She said, simply and sweetly: "I'd do anything to keep *his* good opinion of me."

Norman felt and looked cowed. "You don't know how it makes me suffer to see you fond of another man," he cried.

She seemed not in the least interested, went to the mirror of the bureau and began to inspect her hair with a view to doing it up. "You can go in five minutes," said she. "By that time he'll be well out of the way. Anyhow, if he saw you leaving the house he'd not know but what you had been to see some one else. He knows you by reputation but not by sight."

Norman went to her, took her by the shoulders gently but strongly. "Look at me," he said.

She looked at him with an expression, or perhaps absence of expression, that was simple listening.

"If you meant awhile ago some such thing as I hinted—I will have nothing to do with it. You must marry me—or it's nothing at all."

Her gaze did not wander, but before his wondering eyes she seemed to fade, fade toward colorlessness insig-

nificance. The light died from her eyes, the flush of health from her white skin, the freshness from her lips, the sparkle and vitality from her hair. A slow, gradual transformation, which he watched with a frightened tightening at the heart.

She said slowly: "You—want—me—to—*marry*—you?"

"I've always wanted it, though I didn't realize," replied he. "How else could I be sure of you? Besides—" He flushed, added hurriedly, almost in an undertone—"I owe it to you."

She seated herself deliberately.

After he had waited in vain for her to speak, he went on: "If you married me, I know you'd play square. I could trust you absolutely. I don't know—can't find out much about you—but at least I know that."

"But I don't love you," said she.

"You needn't remind me of it," rejoined he curtly.

"I don't think so—so poorly of you as I used to," she went on. "I understand a lot of things better than I did. But I don't love you, and I feel that I never could."

"I'll risk that," said Norman. Through his clinched teeth, "I've got to risk it."

"I'd be marrying you because I don't feel able to —to make my own way."

"That's the reason most girls have for marrying," said he. "Love comes afterward—if it comes. And

it's the more likely to come for the girl not having faked the man and herself beforehand."

She glanced at the clock. He frowned. She started up. "You *must* go," she said.

"What is your answer?"

"Oh, I couldn't decide so quickly. I must think."

"You mean you must see your young man again —see whether there isn't some way of working it out with him."

"That, too," replied she simply. "But—it's nearly four o'clock——"

"I'll come back at seven for my answer."

"No, I'll write you to-night."

"I must know at once. This suspense has got to end. It unfits me for everything."

"I'll—I'll decide—to-night," she said, with a queer catch in her voice. "You'll get the letter in the morning mail."

"Very well." And he gave her his club address.

She opened the door in her impatience to be rid of him. He went with a hasty "Good-by" which she echoed as she closed the door.

When he left the house he saw standing on the curb before it a tall, good-looking young man—with a frank amiable face. He hesitated, glowering at the young man's profile. Then he went his way, suffocating with jealous anger, depressed, despondent, fit for nothing but to drink and to brood in fatuous futility.

XVI

Until very recently indeed psychology was not an ology at all but an indefinite something or other "up in the air," the sport of the winds and fogs of transcendental tommy rot. Now, however, science has drawn it down, has fitted it in its proper place as a branch of physiology. And we are beginning to have a clearer understanding of the thoughts and the thought-producing actions of ourselves and our fellow beings. Soon it will be no longer possible for the historian and the novelist, the dramatist, the poet, the painter or sculptor to present in all seriousness as instances of sane human conduct, the aberrations resulting from various forms of disease ranging from indigestion in its mild, temper-breeding forms to acute homicidal or suicidal mania. In that day of greater enlightenment a large body of now much esteemed art will become ridiculous. Practically all the literature of strenuous passion will go by the board or will be relegated to the medical library where it belongs; and it, and the annals of violence found in the daily newspapers of our remote time will be cited as documentary proof of the low economic and hygienic conditions prevailing in that almost barbarous

period. For certain it is that the human animal when healthy and well fed is invariably peaceable and kindly and tolerant—up to the limits of selfishness, and even encroaching upon those limits.

Of writing rubbish about love and passion there is no end—and will be no end until the venerable traditional nonsense about those interesting emotions shares the fate that should overtake all the cobwebs of ignorance thickly clogging the windows and walls of the human mind. Of all the fiddle-faddle concerning passion probably none is more shudderingly admired than the notion that one possessed of an overwhelming desire for another longs to destroy that other. It is true there is a form of murderous mania that involves practically all the emotions, including of course the passions—which are as readily subject to derangement as any other part of the human organism. But passion in itself—even when it is so powerful that it dominates the whole life, as in the case of Frederick Norman—passion in itself is not a form of mental derangement in the medical sense. And it does not produce acute selfishness, paranoiac egotism, but a generous and beautiful kind of unselfishness. Not from the first moment of Fred Norman's possession did he wish to injure or in any way to make unhappy the girl he loved. He longed to be happy with her, to have her happy with and through him. He represented his plotting to himself as a plan to make her happier than she ever had been; as for

ultimate consequences, he refused to consider them. The most hardened rake, when passion possesses him, wishes all happiness to the woman of his pursuit. Indifference, coldness—the natural hard-heartedness of the normal man—returns only when the inspiration and elevation of passion disappear in satiety. The man or the woman who continues to inspire passion continues to inspire tenderness and considerateness.

So when Norman left Dorothy that Sunday afternoon, he, being a normal if sore beset human being, was soon in the throes of an agonized remorse. There may have been some hypocrisy in it, some struggling to cover up the baser elements in his infatuation for her. What human emotion of upward tendency has not at least a little of the varnish of hypocrisy on certain less presentable spots in it? But in the main it was a creditable, a manly remorse, and not altogether the writhings of jealousy and jealous fear of losing her.

He saw clearly that she was telling the truth, and telling it too gently, when she said he was responsible for her having standards of living which she could not unaided hope to attain. It is a dreadful thing to interfere in the destiny of a fellow being. We do it all the time; we do it lightly. Nevertheless, it is a dreadful thing—not one that ought not to be done, but one that ought to be done only under imperative compulsion, and then with every precaution. He had interfered in Dorothy Hallowell's destiny. He had lifted her out of

the dim obscure niche where she was ensconced in comparative contentment. He had lifted her up where she had seen and felt the pleasures of a life of luxury.

"But for me," he said to himself, "she would now be marrying this poor young lawyer, or some chap of the same sort, and would be looking forward to a life of happiness in a little flat or suburban cottage."

If she should refuse his offer—what then? Clearly he ought to do his best to help her to happiness with the other man. He smiled cynically at the moral height to which his logic thus pointed the way. Nevertheless, he did not turn away but surveyed it—and there formed in his mind an impulse to make an effort to attempt that height, if Fate should rule against him with her. "If I were a really decent man," thought he, "I'd sit down now and write her that I would not marry her but would give her young man a friendly hand in the law if she wished to marry him." But he knew that such utter generosity was far beyond him. "Only a hero could do it," said he; he added with what a sentimentalist might have called a return of his normal cynicism, "only a hero who really in the bottom of his heart didn't especially want the girl." And a candid person of experience might possibly admit that there was more truth than cynicism in his look askance at the grand army of martyrs of renunciation, most of whom have simply given up something they didn't really want.

"If she accepts me, I'll make it impossible for her not to be happy," he said to himself, in all the fine unselfishness of passion—not divine unselfishness but human—not the kind we read about and pretend to have—and get a savage attack of bruised vanity if we are accused of not having it—no, but just the kind we have and show in our daily lives—the unselfishness of longing to make happy those whom it would make us happier to see happy. "She may think she cares for this young clerk—" so ran his thoughts—"but she doesn't know her own mind. When she is mine, I'll take her in hand as a gardener does a delicate rare flower—and, by Heaven, how I shall make her blossom and bloom!"

It would hardly be possible for a human being to pass a stormier night than was that night of his. Alternations between hope and despair—fantastic pictures of future with and without her, wild pleadings with her—those delirious transports to which our imaginations give way if we happen to be blessed and cursed with imaginations—in the security of the darkness and aloneness of night and bed. And through it all he was tormented body and soul by her loveliness—her hair, her skin, her eyes, the shy, slender graces of her form—He tossed about until his bed was so wildly disheveled that he had to rise and remake it.

When day came and the first mail, there was her letter on the salver of the boy entering the room.

He reached for it with eager, trembling arm, drew back. "Put it on the table," he said.

The boy left. He was alone. Leaning upon his elbow in the bed he stared at the letter with hollow, terrified eyes. It contained his destiny. If she accepted, he would go up, for his soul sickness would be cured. If she refused, he would cease to struggle. He rose, took from a locked drawer a bottle of rye whisky. He poured a tall glass—the kind called a bar glass—half full, drank it straight down without a pause or a quiver. The shock brought him up standing. He looked and acted like his former self as he went to the table, took the letter, opened it, and read:

"I am willing to marry you, if you really want me. I am so tired of struggling, and I don't see anything but dark ahead.—D. H."

Norman struggled over to the bed, threw himself down, flat upon his back, arms and legs extended wide and whole body relaxed. He felt the blood whirl up into his brain like the great red and black tongues of flame and smoke in a conflagration, and then he slept soundly until nearly one o'clock.

To an outsider there would have been a world of homely commonplace pathos in that little letter of the girl's if read aright, that is to say, if read with what was between the lines supplied. It is impossible to live

in cities any length of time and with any sort of eyes without learning the bitter unromantic truths about poverty—city poverty. In quiet, desolate places one may be poor, very poor, without much conscious suffering. There are no teasing contrasts, no torturing temptations. But in a city, if one knows anything at all of the possibilities of civilized life, of the joys and comforts of good food, clothing, and shelter, of theater and concert and excursion, of entertaining and being entertained, poverty becomes a hell. In the country, in the quiet towns, the innocent people wonder at the greediness of the more comfortable kinds of city people, at their love of money, their incessant dwelling upon it, their reverence for those who have it, their panic-like flight from those who have it not. They wonder how folk, apparently human, can be so inhuman. Let them be careful how they judge. If you discover any human being anywhere acting as you think a human being should not, investigate all the circumstances, look thoroughly into all the causes of his or her conduct, before you condemn him or her as inhuman, unworthy of your kinship and your sympathy.

In her brief letter the girl showed that, young though she was and not widely experienced in life, she yet had seen the horrors of city poverty, how it poisons and kills all the fine emotions. She had seen many a loving young couple start out confidently, with a few hundred dollars of debt for furniture—had seen the love fade

and wither, shrivel, die—had seen appear peevishness and hatred and unfaithfulness and all the huge, foul weeds that choke the flowers of married life. She knew what her lover's salary would buy—and what it would not buy—for two. She could imagine their fate if there should be three or more. She showed frankly her selfishness of renunciation. But there could be read between the lines—concealed instead of vaunted—perhaps unsuspected—her unselfishness of renunciation for the sake of her lover and for the sake of the child or the children that might be. In our love of moral sham and glitter, we overlook the real beauties of human morality; we even are so dim or vulgar sighted that we do not see them when they are shown to us.

As Norman awakened, he reached for the telephone, said to the boy in charge of the club exchange: "Look in the book, find the number of a lawyer named Branscombe, and connect me with his office." After some confusion and delay he got the right office, but Dorothy was out at lunch. He left a message that she was to call him up at the club as soon as she came in. He was shaving when the bell rang.

He was at the receiver in a bound. "Is it you?" he said.

"Yes," came in her quiet, small voice.

"Will you resign down there to-day? Will you marry me this afternoon?"

A brief silence, then—"Yes."

Thus it came about that they met at the City Hall license bureau, got their license, and half an hour later were married at the house of a minister in East Thirty-third Street, within a block of the Subway station. He was feverish, gay, looked years younger than his thirty-seven. She was quiet, dim, passive, neither grave nor gay, but going through her part without hesitation, with much the same patient, plodding expression she habitually bore as she sat working at her machine—as if she did not quite understand, but was doing her best and hoped to get through not so badly.

"I've had nothing to eat," said he as they came out of the parsonage.

"Nor I," said she.

"We'll go to Delmonico's," said he, and hailed a passing taxi.

On the way, he sitting in one corner explained to her, shrunk into the other corner: "I can confess now that I married you under false pretenses. I am not prosperous, as I used to be. To be brief and plain, I'm down and out, professionally."

She did not move. Apparently she did not change expression. Yet he, speaking half banteringly, felt some frightful catastrophe within her. "You are—poor?" she said in her usual quiet way.

"*We* are poor," corrected he. "I have at present only a thousand dollars a month—a little more, but not enough to talk about."

She did not move or change expression. Yet he felt that her heart, her blood were going on again.

"Are you—angry?" he asked.

"A thousand dollars a month seems an awful lot of money to me," she said.

"It's nothing—nothing to what we'll soon have. Trust me." And back into his eyes flashed their former look. "I've been sick. I'm well again. I shall get what I want. If you want anything, you've only to ask for it. I'll get it. I know how. . . . I don't prey, myself—I've no fancy for the brutal sports. But I teach lions how to prey, and I make them pay for the lessons." He laughed with an effervescing of young vitality and self-confidence that made him look handsome and powerful. "In the future they'll have to pay still higher prices."

She was looking at him with weary, wondering, pathetic eyes that gazed from the pallor of her dead-white face mysteriously.

"What are you thinking?" he asked.

"I was listening," replied she.

"Doesn't it make you happy—what you are going to have?"

"No," replied she. "But it makes me content."

With eyes suddenly suffused, he took her hand—so gently. "Dorothy," he said, "you will try to love me?"

"I'll try," said she. "You'll be kind to me?"

"I couldn't be anything else," he cried. And in a gust of passion he caught her to his breast and kissed her triumphantly. "I love you—and you're mine—mine!"

She released herself with the faint insistent push that seemed weak, but always accomplished its purpose. Her lip was trembling. "You said you'd be kind," she murmured.

He gazed at her with a baffled expression. "Oh—I understand," he said. "And I shall be kind. But I must teach you to love me."

Her trembling lip steadied. "You must be careful or you may teach me to hate you," said she.

He studied her in a puzzled way, laughed. "What a mystery you are!" he cried with raillery. "Are you child or are you woman? No matter. We shall be happy."

The taxicab was swinging to the curb. In the restaurant he ordered an enormous meal. And he ate enormously, and drank in due proportion. She ate and drank a good deal herself—a good deal for her. And the results were soon apparent in a return of the spirits that are normal to twenty-one years, regardless of what may be lurking in the heart, in a dark corner, to come forth and torment when there is nothing to distract the attention.

"We shall have to live quietly for a while," said he. "Of course you must have clothes—at once. I'll take

you shopping to-morrow." He laughed grimly. "Just at present we can get only what we pay cash for. Still, you won't need much. Later on I'll take you over to Paris. Does that attract you?"

Her eyes shone. "How soon?" she asked.

"I can tell you in a week or ten days." He became abstracted for a moment. "I can't understand how I let them get me down so easily—that is, I can't understand it now. I suppose it's just the difference between being weak with illness and strong with health." His eyes concentrated on her. "Is it really you?" he cried gaily. "And are you really mine? No wonder I feel strong! It was always that way with me. I never could leave a thing until I had conquered it."

She gave him a sweet smile. "I'm not worth all the trouble you seem to have taken about me," said she.

He laughed; for he knew the intense vanity so pleasantly hidden beneath her shy and modest exterior. "On the contrary," said he good-humoredly, "you in your heart think yourself worth any amount of trouble. It's a habit we men have got you women into. And you— One of the many things that fascinate me in you is your supreme self-control. If the king were to come down from his throne and fall at your feet, you'd take it as a matter of course."

She gazed away dreamily. And he understood that her indifference to matters of rank and wealth and power was not wholly vanity but was, in part at least,

due to a feeling that love was the only essential. Nor did he wonder how she was reconciling this belief of high and pure sentiment with what she was doing in marrying him. He knew that human beings are not consistent, cannot be so in a universe that compels them to face directly opposite conditions often in the same moment. But just as all lines are parallel in infinity, so all actions are profoundly consistent when referred to the infinitely broad standard of the necessity that every living thing shall look primarily to its own well being. Disobedience to this fundamental carries with it inevitable punishment of disintegration and death; and those catastrophes are serious matters when one has but the single chance at life, that will be repeated never again in all the eternities.

After their late lunch or early dinner, they drove to her lodgings. He went up with her and helped her to pack—not a long process, as she had few belongings. He noted that the stockings and underclothes she took from the bureau drawers were in anything but good condition, that the half dozen dresses she took from the closet and folded on the couch were about done for. Presently she said, cheerfully and with no trace of false shame:

"You see, I'm pretty nearly in rags."

"Oh, that's soon arranged," replied he. "Why bother to take these things? Why not give them to the maid?"

She debated with herself. "I think you're right," she decided. "Yes, I'll give them to Jennie."

"The underclothes, too," he urged. "And the hats."

It ended in her having left barely enough loosely to fill the bottom of a small trunk with two trays.

They drove to the Knickerbocker Hotel, and he took a small suite, one of the smallest and least luxurious in the house, for with all his desire to make her feel the contrast of her change of circumstances sharply, he could not forget how limited his income was, and how unwise it would be to have to move in a few days to humbler quarters. He hoped that the rooms, englamoured by the hotel's general air of costly luxury, would sufficiently impress her. And while she gave no strong indication but accepted everything in her wonted quiet, passive manner, he was shrewd enough to see that she was content. "To-morrow," he said to himself, "after she has done some shopping, the last regret will leave her, and her memory of that clerk will begin to fade fast. I'll give her too much else to think about."

The following morning, when they faced each other at breakfast in their sitting room, he glanced at her from time to time in wonder and terror. She looked not merely insignificant, but positively homely. Her skin had a sickly pallor; her hair seemed to be of many different and disagreeable shades of uninteresting dead

yellow. Her eyes suggested faded blue china dishes, with colorless lashes and reddened edges of the lids. Her lips had lost their rosy freshness, her teeth their sparkling whiteness.

His heavy heart seemed to be resting nauseously upon the pit of his stomach. Was his infatuation sheer delusion, with no basis of charm in her at all? Was she, indeed, nothing but this unattractive, faded little commonplaceness?—a poor specimen of an inferior order of working girl? What an awakening! And she was his *wife!*—was his companion for the yet more brilliant career he had resolved and was planning! He must introduce her everywhere, must see the not to be concealed amazement in the faces of his acquaintances, must feel the cruel covert laughter and jeering at his weak folly! Was there ever in history or romance a parallel to such fatuity as his? Why, people would be right in thinking him a sham, a mere bluffer at the high and strong qualities he was reputed to have.

Had Norman been, in fact, the man of ice and iron the compulsions of a career under the social system made him seem, the homely girl opposite him that morning would speedily have had something to think about other than her unhappiness of the woman who has given her person to one man and her heart to another. Instead, the few words he addressed to her were all gentleness and forbearance. Stronger than his chagrin was his pity for her—the poor, unconscious victim of his mad hallu-

cination. If she thought about the matter at all, she assumed that he was still the slave of her charms—for, the florid enthusiasm of man's passion inevitably deludes the woman into fancying it objective instead of wholly subjective; and, only the rare very wise woman, after much experience, learns to be suspicious of the validity of her own charms and to concentrate upon keeping up the man's delusions.

At last he rose and kissed her on the brow and let his hand rest gently on her shoulder—what a difference between those caresses and the caresses that had made her beg him to be "kind" to her! Said he:

"Do you mind if I leave you alone for a while? I ought to go to the club and have the rest of my things packed and sent. I'll not be gone long—about an hour."

"Very well," said she lifelessly.

"I'll telephone my office that I'll not be down to-day."

With an effort she said, "There's no reason for doing that. I don't want to interfere with your business."

"I'm neglecting nothing. And that shopping must be done."

She made no reply, but went to the window, and from the height looked down and out upon the mighty spread of the city. He observed her a moment with a dazed pitying expression, took his hat and departed.

It was nearly two hours before he got together suffi-

cient courage to return. He had been hoping—had been saying to himself with vigorous effort at confidence —that he had simply seen one more of the many transformations, each of which seemed to present her as a wholly different personality. When he should see her again, she would have wiped out the personality that had shocked and saddened him, would appear as some new variety of enchantress, perhaps even more potent over his senses than ever before. But a glance as he entered demolished that hope. She was no different than when he left. Evidently she had been crying, and spasms of that sort always accentuate every unloveliness. He did not try to nerve himself to kiss her, but said:

"It'll not take you long to get ready?"

She moved to rise from her languid rest upon the sofa. She sank back. "Perhaps we'd better not go to-day," suggested she.

"Don't you feel well?" he asked, and his tone was more sympathetic than it would have been had his sympathy been genuine.

"Not very," replied she, with a faint deprecating smile. "And not very—not very——"

"Not very what?" he said, in a tone of encouragement.

"Not very happy," she confessed. "I'm afraid I've made a—a dreadful mistake."

He looked at her in silence. She could have said

nothing that would have caused a livelier response within himself. His cynicism noted the fact that while he had mercifully concealed his discontent, she was thinking only of herself. But he did not blame her. It was only the familiar habit of the sex, bred of man's assiduous cultivation of its egotism. He said: "Oh, you'll feel differently about it later. Let's get some fresh air and see what the shops have to offer."

A pause, then she, timidly: "Would you mind very much if I—if I didn't—go on?"

"You mean, if you left me?"

She nodded without looking at him. He could not understand himself, but as he sat observing her, so young, so inexperienced and so undesirable, a pity of which he would not have dreamed his nature capable welled up in him, choking his throat with sobs he could scarcely restrain and filling his eyes with tears he had secretly to wipe away. And he felt himself seized of a sense of responsibility for her as strong in its solemn, still way as any of the paroxysms of his passion had been.

He said: "My dear—you mustn't decide anything so important to you in a hurry."

A tremor passed over her, and he thought she was going to dissolve in hysterics. But she exhibited once more that marvelous and mysterious self-control, whose secret had interested and baffled him. She said in her dim, quiet way:

"It seems to me I just can't stay on."

"You can always go, you know. Why not try it a few days?"

He could feel the trend of her thoughts, and in the way things often amuse us without in the least moving us to wish to laugh, he was amused by noting that she was trying to bring herself to stay on, out of consideration for *his* feelings! He said with a kind of paternal tenderness:

"Whenever you want to go, I am willing to arrange things for you—so that you needn't worry about money. But I feel that, as I am older than you, I ought to do all I can to keep you from making a mistake you might soon regret."

She studied him dubiously. He saw that she—naturally enough—did not believe in his disinterestedness, that she hadn't a suspicion of his change, or, rather collapse, of feeling. She said:

"If you ask it, I'll stay a while. But you must promise to—to be kind to me."

There was only gentleness in his smile. But what a depth of satirical self-mockery and amusement at her innocent young egotism it concealed! "You'll never have reason to speak of that again, my dear," said he.

"I—can—trust you?" she said.

"Absolutely," replied he. "I'll have another room opened into this suite. Would you like that?"

"If you—if you don't mind."

He stood up with sudden boyish buoyance. "Now —let's go shopping. Let's amuse ourselves."

She rose with alacrity. She eyed him uncertainly, then flung her arms round his neck and kissed him. "You are *so* good to me!" she cried. "And I'm not a bit nice."

He did not try to detain her, but sent her to finish dressing, with an encouraging pat on the shoulder and a cheerful, "Don't worry about yourself—or me."

XVII

About half an hour later the door into the bedroom opened and she appeared on the threshold of the sitting room, ready for the street. He stared at her in the dazed amazement of a man faced by the impossible, and uncertain whether it is sight or reason that is tricking him. She had gone into the bedroom not only homely but commonplace, not only commonplace but common, a dingy washed-out blonde girl whom it would be a humiliation to present as his wife. She was standing there, in the majesty of such proud pale beauty as poets delight to ascribe to a sorrowful princess. Her wonderful skin was clear and translucent, giving her an ethereal look. Her hair reminded him again of what marvels he had seen in the sunlight of Sunday afternoon. And looking at her form and the small head so gracefully capping it, he could think only of the simile that had always come to him in his moments of ecstasy—the lily on its tall stem.

And once more, like a torrent, the old infatuation sprang from its dried sources and came rushing and overwhelming through vein and nerve. "Am I mad

now?—was I mad a few moments ago?—is it she or is it my own disordered senses?"

She was drawing on her gloves, was unconscious of his confusion. He controlled himself and said: "You have a most disconcerting way of changing your appearance."

She glanced down at her costume. "No, it's the same dress. I've only the one, you know."

He longed to take her in his arms, but could not trust himself. And this wonder-girl, his very own, was talking of leaving him! And he—not an hour before—he, apparently in his right senses had been tolerating such preposterous talk! Give her up? Never! He must see to it that the subject did not find excuse for intruding again. "I have frightened her—have disgusted her. I must restrain myself. I must be patient—and teach her slowly—and win her gradually."

They spent an interesting and even exciting afternoon, driving from shop to shop and selecting the first beginnings of her wardrobe. He had only about three hundred dollars. Some of the things they ordered were ready for delivery, and so had to be paid for at once. When they returned to the hotel he had but fifty dollars left—and had contracted debts that made it necessary for him to raise at least a thousand dollars within a week. He saw that his freedom with sums of money which terrified her filled her with awe and admiration—and that he was already more successful than he had expected to

be, in increasing her hesitation about leaving him. Among the things they had bought were a simple black chiffon dress and a big plumed black hat to match. These needed no alterations and were delivered soon after they returned. Some silk stockings came also and a pair of slippers bought for the dinner toilet.

"You can dress to-night," said he, "and I'll take you to Sherry's, and to the theater afterwards."

She was delighted. At last she was going to look like the women of whom she had been dreaming these last few months. She set about dressing herself, he waiting in the sitting room in a state of acute nervousness. What would be the effect of such a toilet? Would she look like a lady—or like—what she had suggested that morning? She was so changeable, had such a wide range of variability that he dared not hope. When she finally appeared, he was ready to fall down and worship. He was about to take her where his world would see her, where every inch of her would be subjected to the cruelest, most hostile criticism. One glance at her, and he knew a triumph awaited him. No man and no woman would wonder that he had lost his head over such beauty as hers. Hat and dress seemed just what had been needed to bring out the full glory of her charms.

"You are incredibly beautiful," he said in an awed tone. "I am proud of you."

A little color came into her cheeks. She looked at herself in the mirror with her quiet intense secret, yet

not covert vanity. He laughed in boyish pleasure. "This is only the small beginning," said he. "Wait a few months."

At dinner and in a box at the theater afterwards, he had the most exquisite pleasure of his life. She had been seen by many of his former friends, and he was certain they knew who she was. He felt that he would have no difficulty in putting her in the place his wife should occupy. A woman with such beauty as hers was a sensation, one fashionable society would not deny itself. She had good manners, an admirable manner. With a little coaching she would be as much at home in grandeur as were those who had always had it.

The last fear of losing her left him. On the way back to the hotel he, in a delirium of pride and passion, crushed her in his arms and caressed her with the frenzy that had always terrified her. She resisted only faintly, was almost passive. "She is mine!" he said to himself, exultantly. "She is really mine!"

When he awoke in the morning she was still asleep—looked like a tired lovely child. Several times, while he was dressing, he went in to feast his eyes upon her beauty. How could he possibly have thought her homely, in whatever moment of less beauty or charm she might have had? The crowning charm of infinite variety! She had a delightfully sweet disposition. He was not sure how much or how little intelligence she

had—probably more than most women. But what did that matter? It would be impossible ever to grow weary or to be anything but infatuated lover when she had such changeful beauty.

He kissed her lightly on her thick braids, as he was about to go. He left a note explaining that he did not wish to disturb her and that it was necessary for him to be at the office earlier. And that morning in all New York no man left his home for the day's struggle for dollars with a freer or happier heart, or readier to play the game boldly, skillfully, with success.

Certainly he needed all his courage and all his skill.

To most of the people who live in New York and elsewhere throughout the country—or the world, for that matter—an income of a thousand dollars a month seems extremely comfortable, to say the least of it. The average American family of five has to scrape along on about half that sum a year. But among the comfortable classes in New York—and perhaps in one or two other cities—a thousand dollars a month is literally genteel poverty. To people accustomed to what is called luxury nowadays—people with the habit of the private carriage, the private automobile, and several servants—to such people a thousand dollars a month is an absurd little sum. It would not pay for the food alone. It would not buy for a man and his wife, with no children, clothing enough to enable them to make a decent appearance.

Norman, living alone and living very quietly indeed, might have got along for a while on that sum, if he had taken much thought about expenditures, had persisted in such severe economies as using street cars instead of taxicabs and drinking whisky at dinner instead of his customary quart of six-dollar champagne. Norman, the married man, could not escape disaster for a single month on an income so pitiful.

Probably on the morning on which he set out for downtown in search of money enough to enable him to live decently, not less than ten thousand men on Manhattan Island left comfortable or luxurious homes faced with precisely the same problem. And each and every one of them knew that on that day or some day soon they must find the money demanded imperiously by their own and their families' tastes and necessities or be ruined —flung out, trampled upon, derided as failures, hated by the "loved ones" they had caused to be humiliated. And every man of that legion had a fine, an unusually fine brain—resourceful, incessant, teeming with schemes for wresting from those who had dollars the dollars they dared not go home without. And those ten thousand quickest and most energetic brains, by their mode of thought and action, determined the thought and action of the entire country—gave the mercenary and unscrupulous cast to the whole social system. Themselves the victims of conditions, they were the bellwethers to millions of victims compelled to follow their leadership.

Norman, by the roundabout mode of communication he and Tetlow had established, summoned his friend and backer to his office. "Tetlow," he began straight off, "I've got to have more money."

"How much?" said Tetlow.

"More than you can afford to advance me."

"How much?" repeated Tetlow.

"Three thousand a month right away—at the least."

"That's a big sum," said Tetlow.

"Yes, for a man used to dealing in small figures. But in reality it's a moderate income."

"Few large families spend more."

"Few large or small families in my part of New York pinch along on so little."

"What has happened to you?" said Tetlow, dropping into a chair and folding his fat hands on his stomach.

"Why?" asked Norman.

"It's in your voice—in your face—in your cool demand for a big income."

"Let's start right, old man," said Norman. "Don't *call* thirty-six thousand a year big or you'll *think* it big. And if you think it big, you will stay little."

Tetlow nodded. "I'm ready to grow," said he. "Now what's happened to you?"

"I've got married," replied Norman.

"I thought so. To Miss—Hallowell?"

"To Miss Hallowell. So my way's clear, and I'm going to resume the march."

"Yes?"

"I've two plans. Either will serve. The first is yours—the one you partly revealed to me the other day."

"Partly?" said Tetlow.

"Partly," repeated Norman, laughing. "I know you, Billy, and that means I know you're absolutely incapable of plotting as big a scheme as you suggested to me. It came either from Galloway or from some one of his clique."

"I said all I'm at liberty to say, Fred."

"I don't wish you to break your promise. All I want to know is, can I get the three thousand a month and assurance of its lasting and leading to something bigger?"

"What is your other scheme?" said Tetlow, and it was plain to the shrewder young lawyer that the less shrewd young lawyer wished to gain time.

"Simple and sure," replied Norman. "We will buy ten shares of Universal Fuel Company through a dummy and bring suit to dissolve it. I looked into the matter for Burroughs once when he was after the Fosdick-Langdon group. Universal Fuel wouldn't dare defend the action I could bring. We could get what we pleased for our ten shares to let up on the suit. The moment their lawyers saw the papers I'd draw, they'd advise it."

Tetlow shook his large, impressively molded head. "Shady," said he. "Shady."

Norman smiled with good-natured patience. "You sound like Burroughs or Galloway when they are denouncing a man for trying to get rich by the same methods they pursued. My dear Bill, don't be one of those lawyers who will do the queer work for a client but not for themselves. There's no sense, no morality, no intelligent hypocrisy even, in that. We didn't create the commercial morality of the present day. For God's sake, let's not be of the poor fools who practice it but get none of its benefits."

Tetlow shifted uneasily. "I don't like to hear that sort of thing," said he, apologetic and nervous.

"Is it true?"

"Yes. But—damn it, I don't like to hear it."

"That is to say, you're willing to pay the price of remaining small and obscure just for the pleasure of indulging in a wretched hypocrisy of a self-deception. Bill, come out of the small class. Whether you go in with me or not, come out of the class of understrappers. What's the difference between the big men and their little followers? Why, the big men *see*. They don't deceive themselves with the cant they pour out for the benefit of the ignorant mob."

Tetlow was listening like a pupil to a teacher. That was always his attitude toward Norman.

"The big men," continued Norman, "know that

canting is necessary—that one must always profess high and disinterested motives, and so on, and so on. But they don't let their hypocritical talk influence their actions. How is it with the little fellows? Why, they believe the flapdoodle the leaders talk. They go into the enterprise, do all the small dirty work, lie and cheat and steal, and hand over the proceeds to the big fellows, for the sake of a pat on the back and a noisy 'Honest fellow! Here are a few crumbs for you.' And crumbs are all that a weak, silly, hypocritical fool deserves. Can you deny it?"

"No doubt you're right, Fred," conceded Tetlow. "But I'm afraid I haven't the nerve."

"Come in behind me. I've got nerve for two—*now!*"

At that triumphant "now" Tetlow looked curiously at his friend. "Yes, *it* has changed you—changed you back to what you were. I don't understand."

"It isn't necessary that you understand," rejoined Norman."

"Do you think you could really carry through that scheme you've just outlined?"

"I see it fascinates you."

"I've no objection to rising to the class of big men," said Tetlow. "But aren't you letting your confidence in yourself deceive you?"

"Did I ever let it deceive me?"

"No," confessed Tetlow. "I've often watched you,

and thought you'd fall through it, or stumble at least. But you never did."

"And shall I tell you why? Because I use my self-confidence and my hopefulness and all my optimistic qualities only to create an atmosphere of success. But when it comes to planning a move of any kind, when I assemble my lieutenants round the council board in my brain, I never permit a single cheerful one to speak, or even to enter. It's a serious, gloomy circle of faces, Bill."

Tetlow nodded reminiscently. "Yes, you always were like that, Fred."

"And the one who does the most talking at my council is the gloomiest of all. He's Lieutenant Flaw-picker. He can't see any hope for anything. He sees all the possibilities of failure. He sees all the chances against success. And what's the result? Why, when the council rises it has taken out of the plan every chance of mishap that my intelligence could foresee—and it has provided not one but several safe lines of orderly retreat in case success proves impossible."

Tetlow gazed at Norman in worshipful admiration. "What a brain! What a mind!" he ejaculated. "And to think that *you* could be upset by a *woman!*"

Norman leaned back in his chair smiling broadly. "Not by a woman," he corrected. "By a girl—an inexperienced girl of twenty."

"It seems incredible."

"A grain of dust, dropped into a watch movement in just the right place—you know what happens."

Tetlow nodded. Then, with a sharp, anxious look, "But it's all over?"

Norman hesitated. "I believe so," he said.

Tetlow rose and rubbed his thighs. He had been sitting long in the same position, and he was now stout enough to suffer from fat man's cramp. "Well," said he, "we needn't bother about that Universal Fuel scheme at present. I can guarantee you the three thousand dollars, and the other things."

Norman shook his head. "Not enough," he said.

"You want more money?"

"No. But I will not work, or rather, wait, in the dark. Tell your principals that I must be let in."

Tetlow hesitated, walking about the office. Finally he said, "Look here, Fred—you think I deceived you the other day—posed as your friend when in reality I was simply acting as agent for people who wanted you."

Norman gave Tetlow a look that made him redden with pleasure. "No, I don't, old man," said he. "I know you recommended me—and that they were shy of me because of the way I've been acting—and that you stood sponsor for me. Isn't that right?"

"Something like that," admitted Tetlow. "But they were eager to get you. It was only a question of trusting you. I was able to do you a good turn there."

"And I'll make a rich man, and a famous one, of you," said Norman.

"Yes. I believe you will," cried Tetlow, tears in his prominent studious eyes. "I'll see those people in a day or two, and let you know. Do you need money right away? Of course you do." And down he sat and drew a check for fifteen hundred dollars.

Norman laughed as he glanced to see if it was correctly drawn. "I'd not have dared return to my bride with empty pockets. That's what it means to live in New York."

Tetlow grinned. "A sentimental town, isn't it? Especially the women."

"Oh, I don't blame them," said Norman. "They need the money, and the only way they've got of making it is out of sentiment. And you must admit they give a bully good quality, if the payment is all right."

Tetlow shrugged his shoulders. "I'm glad I don't need them," said he. "It gives me the creeps to see them gliding about with their beautiful dresses and their sweet, soft faces."

He and Norman lunched together in an out-of-the-way restaurant. After a busy and a happy afternoon, Norman returned early to the hotel. He had cashed his check. He was in funds. He would give her another and more thrilling taste of the joy that was to be hers through him—and soon she would be giving even as she got—for he would teach her not to fear

love, not to shrink from it, but to rejoice in it and to let it permeate and complete all her charms.

He ascended to the apartment and knocked. There was no answer. He searched in vain for a chambermaid to let him in. He descended to the office. "Oh, Mr. Norman," said one of the clerks. "Your wife left this note for you."

Norman took it. "She went out?"

"About three o'clock—with a young gentleman who called on her. They came back a while ago and she left the note."

"Thank you," said Norman. He took his key, went up to the apartment. Not until he had closed and locked the door did he open the note. He read:

"Last night you broke your promise. So I am going away. Don't look for me. It won't be any use. When I decide what to do I'll send you word."

He was standing at the table. He tossed the note on the marble, threw open the bedroom door. The black chiffon dress, the big plumed hat, and all the other articles they had bought were spread upon the bed, arranged with the obvious intention that he should see at a glance she had taken nothing away with her.

"Hell!" he said aloud. "Why didn't I let her go yesterday morning?"

XVIII

A few days later, Tetlow, having business with Norman, tried to reach him by telephone. After several failures he went to the hotel, and in the bar learned enough to enable him to guess that Norman was off on a mad carouse. He had no difficulty in finding the trail or in following it; the difficulty lay in catching up, for Norman was going fast. Not until late at night—that is, early in the morning—of the sixth day from the beginning of his search did he get his man.

He was prepared to find a wreck, haggard, wildly nervous and disreputably disheveled; for, so far as he could ascertain Norman had not been to bed, but had gone on and on from one crowd of revelers to another, in a city where it is easy to find companions in dissipation at any hour of the twenty-four. Tetlow was even calculating upon having to put off their business many weeks while the crazy man was pulling through delirium tremens or some other form of brain fever.

An astonishing sight met his eyes in the Third Avenue oyster house before which the touring car Norman had been using was drawn up. At a long table, eating oysters as fast as the opener could work, sat

Norman and his friend Gaskill, a fellow member of the Federal Club, and about a score of broken and battered tramps. The supper or breakfast was going forward in admirable order. Gaskill, whom Norman had picked up a few hours before, showed signs of having done some drinking. But not Norman. It is true his clothing might have looked fresher; but hardly the man himself.

"Just in time!" he cried out genially, at sight of Tetlow. "Sit down with us. Waiter, a chair next to mine. Gentlemen, Mr. Tetlow. Mr. Tetlow, gentlemen. What'll you have, old man?"

Tetlow declined champagne, accepted half a dozen of the huge oysters. "I've been after you for nearly a week," said he to Norman.

"Pity you weren't *with* me," said Norman. "I've been getting acquainted with large numbers of my fellow citizens."

"From the Bowery to Yonkers."

"Exactly. Don't fall asleep, Gaskill."

But Gaskill was snoring with his head on the back of his chair and his throat presented as if for the ax of the executioner. "He's all in," said Tetlow.

"That's the way it goes," complained Norman. "I can't find anyone to keep me company."

Tetlow laughed. "You look as if you had just started out," said he. "Tell me—*where* have you slept?"

"I haven't had time to sleep as yet."

"I dropped in to suggest that a little sleep wouldn't do any harm."

"Not quite yet. Watch our friends eat. It gives me an appetite. Waiter, another dozen all round—and some more of this carbonated white wine you've labeled champagne."

As he called out this order, a grunt of satisfaction ran round the row of human derelicts. Tetlow shuddered, yet was moved and thrilled, too, as he glanced from face to face—those hideous hairy countenances, begrimed and beslimed, each countenance expressing in its own repulsive way the one emotion of gratified longing for food and drink. "Where did you get 'em?" inquired he.

"From the benches in Madison Square," replied Norman. He laughed queerly. "Recognize yourself in any of those mugs, Tetlow?" he asked.

Tetlow shivered. "I should say not!" he exclaimed.

Norman's eyes gleamed. "I see myself in all of 'em," said he.

"Poor wretches!" muttered Tetlow.

"Pity wasted," he rejoined. "You might feel sorry for a man on the way to where they've got. But once arrived—as well pity a dead man sleeping quietly in his box with three feet of solid earth between him and worries of every kind."

"Shake this crowd," said Tetlow impatiently. "I want to talk with you."

"All right, if it bores you." He sent the waiter out for enough lodging-house tickets to provide for all. He distributed them himself, to make sure that the proprietor of the restaurant did not attempt to graft. Then he roused Gaskill and bundled him into the car and sent it away to his address. The tramps gathered round and gave Norman three cheers—they pressed close while four of them tried to pick his and Tetlow's pockets. Norman knocked them away good-naturedly, and he and Tetlow climbed into Tetlow's hansom.

"To my place," suggested Tetlow.

"No, to mine—the Knickerbocker," replied Norman.

"I'd rather you went to my place first," said Tetlow uneasily.

"My wife isn't with me. She has left me," said Norman calmly.

Tetlow hesitated, extremely nervous, finally acquiesced. They drove a while in silence, then Norman said, "What's the business?"

"Galloway wants to see you."

"Tell him to come to my office to-morrow—that means to-day—at any time after eleven."

"But that gives you no chance to pull yourself together," objected Tetlow.

Norman's face, seen in the light of the street lamp they happened to be passing, showed ironic amusement. "Never mind about me, Billy. Tell him to come."

Tetlow cleared his throat nervously. "Don't you think, old man, that you'd better go to see him? I'll arrange the appointment."

Norman said quietly: "Tetlow, I've dropped pretty far. But not so far that I go to my clients. The rule of calls is that the man seeking the favor goes to the man who can grant it."

"But it isn't the custom nowadays for a lawyer to deal that way with a man like Galloway."

"And neither is it the custom for anyone to have any self-respect. Does Galloway need my brains more than I need his money, or do I need his money more than he needs my brains? You know what the answer to that is, Billy. We are partners—you and I. I'm training you for the position."

"Galloway won't come," said Tetlow curtly.

"So much the worse for him," retorted Norman placidly. "No—I've not been drinking too much, old man—as your worried-old-maid look suggests. Do a little thinking. If Galloway doesn't get me, whom will he get?"

"You know very well, Norman, there are scores of lawyers, good ones, who'd crawl at his feet for his business. Nowadays, most lawyers are always looking round for a pair of rich man's boots to lick."

"But I am not 'most lawyers,'" said Norman. "Of course, if Galloway could make me come to him, he'd be a fool to come to me. But when he finds I'm not coming, why, he'll behave himself—if his business is important enough for me to bother with."

"But if he doesn't come, Fred?"

"Then—my Universal Fuel scheme, or some other equally good. But you will never see me limbering my knees in the anteroom of a rich man, when he needs me and I don't need him."

"Well, we'll see," said Tetlow, with the air of a sober man patient with one who is not sober.

"By the way," continued Norman, "if Galloway says he's too ill to come—or anything of that sort—tell him I'd not care to undertake the affairs of a man too old or too feeble to attend to business, as he might die in the midst of it."

Tetlow's face was such a wondrous exhibit of discomfiture that Norman laughed outright. Evidently he had forestalled his fat friend in a scheme to get him to Galloway in spite of himself. "All right—all right," said Tetlow fretfully. "We'll sleep on this. But I don't see why you're so opposed to going to see the man. It looks like snobbishness to me—false pride—silly false pride."

"It *is* snobbishness," said Norman. "But you forget that snobbishness rules the world. The way to rule fools is to make them respect you. And the way

to make them respect you is by showing them that they are your inferiors. I want Galloway's respect because I want his money. And I'll not get his money—as much of it as belongs to me—except by showing him my value. Not my value as a lawyer, for he knows that already, but my value as a man. Do you see?"

"No, I don't," snapped Tetlow.

"That's what it means to be Tetlow. Now, I do see—and that's why I'm Norman."

Tetlow looked at him doubtfully, uncertain whether he had been listening to wisdom put in a jocose form of audacious egotism or to the effervescings of intoxication. The hint of a smile lurking in the sobriety of the powerful features of his extraordinary friend only increased his doubt. Was Norman mocking him, and himself as well? If so, was it the mockery of sober sense or of drunkenness?

"You seem to be puzzled, Billy," said Norman, and Tetlow wondered how he had seen. "Don't get your brains in a stew trying to understand me. I'm acting the way I've always acted—except in one matter. You know that I know what I'm about?"

"I certainly do," replied his admirer.

"Then, let it go at that. If you could understand me—the sort of man I am, the sort of thing I do—you'd not need me, but would be the whole show yourself—eh? That being true, don't show yourself a com-

monplace nobody by deriding and denying what your brain is unable to comprehend. Show yourself a somebody by seeing the limitations of your ability. The world is full of little people who criticise and judge and laugh at and misunderstand the few real intelligences. And very tedious interruptions of the scenery those little people are. Don't be one of them. . . . Did you know my wife's father?"

Tetlow startled. "No—that is, yes," he stammered. "That is, I met him a few times."

"Often enough to find out that he was crazy?"

"Oh, yes. He explained some of his ideas to me. Yes—he was quite mad, poor fellow."

Norman gave way to a fit of silent laughter. "I can imagine," he presently said, "what you'd have thought if Columbus or Alexander or Napoleon or Stevenson or even the chaps who doped out the telephone and the telegraph—if they had talked to you before they arrived. Or even after they arrived, if they had been explaining some still newer and bigger idea not yet accomplished."

"You don't think Mr. Hallowell was mad?"

"He was mad, assuming that you are the standard of sanity. Otherwise, he was a great man. There'll be statues erected and pages of the book of fame devoted to the men who carry out his ideas."

"His death was certainly a great loss to his daughter," said Tetlow in his heaviest, most bourgeois manner.

"I said he was a great man," observed Norman. "I didn't say he was a great father. A great man is never a great father. It takes a small man to be a great father."

"At any rate, her having no parents or relatives doesn't matter, now that she has you," said Tetlow, his manner at once forced and constrained.

"Um," muttered Norman.

Said Tetlow: "Perhaps you misunderstood why I—I acted as I did about her, toward the last."

"It was of no importance," said Norman brusquely. "I wish to hear nothing about it."

"But I must explain, Fred. She piqued me by showing so plainly that she despised me. I must admit the truth, though I've got as much vanity as the next man, and don't like to admit it. She despised me, and it made me mad."

An expression of grim satire passed over Norman's face. Said he: "She despised me, too."

"Yes, she did," said Tetlow. "And both of us were certainly greatly her superiors—in every substantial way. It seemed to me most—most——"

"Most impertinent of her?" suggested Norman.

"Precisely. *Most* impertinent."

"Rather say, ignorant and small. My dear Tetlow, let me tell you something. Anybody, however insignificant, can be loved. To be loved means nothing, except possibly a hallucination in the brain of the lover.

But to *love*—that's another matter. Only a great soul is capable of a great love."

"That is true," murmured Tetlow sentimentally, preening in a quiet, gentle way.

Said Norman sententiously: "*You* stopped loving. It was *I* that kept on."

Tetlow looked uncomfortable. "Yes—yes," he said. "But we were talking of her—of her not appreciating the love she got. And I was about to say—" Earnestly— "Fred, she's not to be blamed for her folly! She's very, very young—and has all the weaknesses and vanities of youth——"

"Here we are," interrupted Norman.

The hansom had stopped in Forty-second Street before the deserted but still brilliantly lighted entrances to the great hotel. Norman sprang out so lightly and surely that Tetlow wondered how it was possible for this to be the man who had been racketing and roistering day after day, night after night for nearly a week. He helped the heavy and awkward Tetlow to descend, said:

"You'll have to pay, Bill. I've got less than a dollar left. And I touched Gaskill for a hundred and fifty to-night. You can imagine how drunk he was, to let me have it. How they've been shying off from *me* these last few months!"

"And you want *Galloway* to come to *you*," thrust Tetlow, as he counted out the money.

"Don't go back and chew on that," laughed Norman. "It's settled." He took the money, gave it to the driver. "Thanks," he said to Tetlow. "I'll pay you to-morrow—that is, later to-day—when you send me another check."

"Why should you pay for my cab?" rejoined Tetlow.

"Because it's easier for me to make money than it is for you," replied Norman. "If you were in my position—the position I've been in for months—would anybody on earth give you three thousand dollars a month?"

Tetlow looked sour. His good nature was rubbing thin in spots.

"Don't lose your temper," laughed Norman. "I'm pounding away at you about my superiority, partly because I've been drinking, but chiefly for your own good—so that you'll realize I'm right and not mess things with Galloway."

They went up to Norman's suite. Norman tried to unlock the door, found it already unlocked. He turned the knob, threw the door wide for Tetlow to enter first. Then, over Tetlow's shoulder he saw on the marble-topped center table Dorothy's hat and jacket, the one she had worn away, the only one she had. He stared at them, then at Tetlow. A confused look in the fat, slow face made him say sharply:

"What does this mean, Tetlow?"

"Not so loud, Fred," said Tetlow, closing the door into the public hall. "She's in the bedroom—probably asleep. She's been here since yesterday."

"You brought her back?" demanded Norman.

"She wanted to come. I simply——"

Norman made a silencing gesture. Tetlow's faltering voice stopped short. Norman stood near the table, his hands deep in his trousers' pockets, his gaze fixed upon the hat and jacket. When Tetlow's agitation could bear the uncertainties of that silence no longer, he went on:

"Fred, you mustn't forget how young and inexperienced she is. She's been foolish, but nothing more. She's as pure as when she came into the world. And it's the truth that she wanted to come back. I saw it as soon as I began to talk with her."

"What are you chattering about?" said Norman fiercely. "Why did you meddle in my affairs? Why did you bring her back?"

"I knew she needed you," pleaded Tetlow. "Then, too—I was afraid— I knew how you acted before, and I thought you'd not get your gait again until you had her."

Norman gave a short sardonic laugh. "If you'd only stop trying to understand me!" he said.

Tetlow was utterly confused. "But, Fred, you don't realize—not all," he cried imploringly. "She discovered—she thinks, I believe—that is—she—she

—that probably—that in a few months you'll be something more than a husband—and she something more than a wife—that you—that—you and she will be a father and a mother."

Tetlow's meaning slowly dawned on Norman. He seated himself in his favorite attitude, legs sprawled, fingers interlaced behind his head.

"Wasn't I right to bring her back—to tell her she needn't fear to come?" pleaded Tetlow.

Norman made no reply. After a brief silence he said: "Well, good night, old man. Come round to my office any time after ten." He rose and gave Tetlow his hand. "And arrange for Galloway whenever you like. Good night."

Tetlow hesitated. "Fred—you'll not be harsh to her?" he said.

Norman smiled—a satirical smile, yet exquisitely gentle. "If you *only* wouldn't try to understand me, Bill," he said.

When he was alone he sat lost in thought. At last he rang for a bell boy. And when the boy came, he said: "That door there"—indicating one in the opposite wall of the sitting room—"what does it lead into?"

"Another bedroom, sir."

"Unlock it, and tell them at the office I wish that room added to my suite."

As soon as the additional bedroom was at his dis-

posal, he went in and began to undress. When he had taken off coat and waistcoat he paused to telephone to the office a call for eight o'clock. As he finished and hung up the receiver, a sound from the direction of the sitting room made him glance in there. On the threshold of the other bedroom stood his wife. She was in her nightgown; her hair, done in a single thick braid, hung down across her bosom. There was in the room and upon her childish loveliness the strange commingling of lights and shadows that falls when the electricity is still on and the early morning light is pushing in at the windows. They looked at each other in silence for some time. If she was frightened or in the least embarrassed she did not show it. She simply looked at him, while ever so slowly a smile dawned—a gleam in the eyes, a flutter round the lips, growing merrier and merrier. He did not smile. He continued to regard her gravely.

"I heard you and Mr. Tetlow come in," she said. "Then—you talked so long—I fell asleep again. I only this minute awakened."

"Well, now you can go to sleep again," said he.

"But I'm not a bit sleepy. What are you doing in that room?"

She advanced toward his door. He stood aside. She peeped in. She was so close to him that her nightgown brushed the bosom of his shirt. "Another bedroom!" she exclaimed. "Just like ours."

"I didn't wish to disturb you," said he, calm and grave.

"But you wouldn't have been disturbing me," protested she, leaning against the door frame, less than two feet away and directly facing him.

"I'll stay on here," said he.

She gazed at him with great puzzled eyes. "Aren't you glad I'm back?" she asked.

"Certainly," said he with a polite smile. "But I must get some sleep." And he moved away.

"You must let me tell you how I happened to go and why I came——"

"Please," he interrupted, looking at her with a piercing though not in the least unfriendly expression that made her grow suddenly pale and thoughtful. "I do not wish to hear about it—not now—not ever. Tetlow told me all that it's necessary for me to know. You have come to stay, I assume?"

"Yes—if"—her lip quivered—"if you'll let me."

"There can be no question of that," said he with the same polite gravity he had maintained throughout.

"You want me to leave you alone?"

"Please. I need sleep badly—and I've only three hours."

"You are—angry with me?"

He looked placidly into her lovely, swimming eyes. "Not in the least."

"But how can you help being? I acted dreadfully."

He smiled gently. "But you are back—and the incident is closed."

She looked down at the carpet, her fingers playing with her braid, twisting and untwisting its strands. He stood waiting to close the door. She said, without lifting her eyes—said in a quiet, expressionless way, "I have killed your love?"

"I'll not trouble you any more," evaded he. And he laid his hand significantly upon the knob.

"I don't understand," she murmured. Then, with a quick apologetic glance at him, "But I'm very inconsiderate. You want to sleep. Good night."

"Good night," said he, beginning to close the door.

She impulsively stood close before him, lifted her small white face, as if for a kiss. "Do you forgive me?" she asked. "I was foolish. I didn't understand —till I went back. Then—nothing was the same. And I knew I wasn't fitted for that life—and didn't really care for him—and——"

He kissed her on the brow. "Don't agitate yourself," said he. "And we will never speak of this again."

She shrank as if he had struck her. Her head drooped, and her shoulders. When she was clear of the door, he quietly closed it.

XIX

It was not many minutes after ten when Tetlow hurried into Norman's office. "Galloway's coming at eleven!" said he, with an air of triumph.

"So you mulled over what I said and decided that I was not altogether drunk?"

"I wasn't sure of that," replied Tetlow. "But I was afraid you'd be offended if I didn't try to get him. He gave me no trouble at all. As soon as I told him you'd be glad to see him at your office, he astounded me by saying he'd come."

"He and I have had dealings," said Norman. "He understood at once. I always know my way when I'm dealing with a big man. It's only the little people that are muddled and complex. I hope you'll not forget this lesson, Billy."

"I shan't," promised Tetlow.

"We are to be partners," pursued Norman. "We shall be intimately associated for years. You'll save me a vast amount of time and energy and yourself a vast amount of fuming and fretting, if you'll simply accept what I say, without discussion. When I want discussion I'll ask your advice."

"I'm afraid you don't think it's worth much," said Tetlow humbly, "and I guess it isn't."

"On the contrary, invaluable," declared Norman with flattering emphasis. "Where you lack and I excel is in decision and action. I'll often get you to tell me what ought to be done, and then I'll make you do it—which you'd never dare, by yourself."

At eleven sharp Galloway came, looking as nearly like a dangerous old eagle as a human being well could. Rapacious, merciless, tyrannical; a famous philanthropist. Stingy to pettiness; a giver away of millions. Rigidly honest, yet absolutely unscrupulous; faithful to the last letter of his given word, yet so treacherous where his sly mind could nose out a way to evade the spirit of his agreements that his name was a synonym for unfaithfulness. An assiduous and groveling snob, yet so militantly democratic that, unless his interest compelled, he would not employ any member of the "best families" in any important capacity. He seemed a bundle of contradictions. In fact he was profoundly consistent. That is to say, he steadily pursued in every thought and act the gratification of his two passions—wealth and power. He lost no seen opportunity, however shameful, to add to his fortune or to amuse himself with the human race, which he regarded with the unpitying contempt characteristic of every cold nature born or risen to success.

His theory of life—and it is the theory that explains

most great financial successes, however they may pretend or believe—his theory of life was that he did not need friends because the friends of a strong man weaken and rob him, but that he did need enemies because he could grow rich and powerful destroying and despoiling them. To him friends suggested the birds living in a tree. They might make the tree more romantic to the unthinking observer; but they in fact ate its budding leaves and its fruit and rotted its bough joints with their filthy nests.

We Americans are probably nearest to children of any race in civilization. The peculiar conditions of life—their almost Arcadian simplicity—up to a generation or so ago, gave us a false training in the study of human nature. We believe what the good preacher, the novelist and the poet, all as ignorant of life as nursery books, tell us about the human heart. We fancy that in a social system modeled upon the cruel and immoral system of Nature, success is to the good and kind. Life is like the pious story in the Sunday-school library; evil is the exception and to practice the simple virtues is to tread with sure step the highway to riches and fame. This sort of ignorance is taught, is proclaimed, is apparently accepted throughout the world. Literature and the drama, representing life as it is dreamed by humanity, life as it perhaps may be some day, create an impression which defies the plain daily and hourly mockings of experience. Because weak and petty of-

fenders are often punished, the universe is pictured as sternly enforcing the criminal codes enacted by priests or lawyers. But, while all the world half inclines to this agreeable mendacity about life, only in America of all civilization is the mendacity accepted as gospel, and suspicion about it frowned upon as the heresy of cynicism. So the Galloways prosper and are in high moral repute. Some day we shall learn that a social system which is merely a slavish copy of Nature's barbarous and wasteful sway of the survival of the toughest could be and ought to be improved upon by the intelligence of the human race. Some day we shall put Nature in its proper place as kindergarten teacher, and drop it from godship and erect enlightened human understanding instead. But that is a long way off. Meanwhile the Galloways will reign, and will assure us that they won their success by the Decalogue and the Golden Rule—and will be believed by all who seek to assure for themselves in advance almost certain failure at material success in the arena of action.

But they will not be believed by men of ambition, pushing resolutely for power and wealth. So Frederick Norman knew precisely what he was facing when Galloway's tall gaunt figure and face of the bird of prey appeared before him. Galloway had triumphed and was triumphing not through obedience to the Sunday sermons and the silly novels, poems, plays, and the nonsense chattered by the obscure multitudes whom the

mighty few exploit, but through obedience to the conditions imposed by our social system. If he raised wages a little, it was in order that he might have excuse for raising prices a great deal. If he gave away millions, it was for his fame, and usually to quiet the scandal over some particularly wicked wholesale robbery. No, Galloway was not a witness to the might of altruistic virtue as a means to triumph. Charity and all the other forms of chicanery by which the many are defrauded and fooled by the few—those "virtues" he understood and practiced. But justice—humanity's ages-long dream that at last seems to glitter as a hope in the horizon of the future—justice—not legal justice, nor moral justice, but human justice—that idea would have seemed to him ridiculous, Utopian, something for the women and the children and the socialists.

Norman understood Galloway, and Galloway understood Norman. Galloway, with an old man's garrulity and a confirmed moral poseur's eagerness about appearances, began to unfold his virtuous reasons for the impending break with Burroughs—the industrial and financial war out of which he expected to come doubly rich and all but supreme. Midway he stopped.

"You are not listening," said he sharply to the young man.

Their eyes met. Norman's eyes were twinkling. "No," said he, "I am waiting."

There was the suggestion of an answering gleam of

sardonic humor in Galloway's cold gray eyes. "Waiting for what?"

"For you to finish with me as father confessor, to begin with me as lawyer. Pray don't hurry. My time is yours." This with a fine air of utmost suavity and respect.

In fact, while Galloway was doddering on and on with his fake moralities, Norman was thinking of his own affairs, was wondering at his indifference about Dorothy. The night before—the few hours before—when he had dealt with her so calmly, he, even as he talked and listened and acted, had assumed that the enormous amount of liquor he had been consuming was in some way responsible. He had said to himself, "When I am over this, when I have had sleep and return to the normal, I shall again be the foolish slave of all these months." But here he was, sober, having taken only enough whisky to prevent an abrupt let-down—here he was viewing her in the same tranquil light. No longer all his life; no longer even dominant; only a part of life—and he was by no means certain that she was an important part.

How explain the mystery of the change? Because she had voluntarily come back, did he feel that she was no longer baffling but was definitely his? Or had passion running madly on and on dropped—perhaps not dead, but almost dead—from sheer exhaustion?—was it weary of racing and content to saunter and to stroll?

. . . He could not account for the change. He only knew that he who had been quite mad was now quite sane. . . . Would he like to be rid of her? Did he regret that they were tied together? No, curiously enough. It was high time he got married; she would do as well as another. She had beauty, youth, amiability, physical charm for him. There was advantage in the fact that her inferiority to him, her dependence on him, would enable him to take as much or as little of her as he might feel disposed, to treat her as the warrior must ever treat his entire domestic establishment from wife down to pet dog or cat or baby. . . . No, he did not regret Josephine. He could see now disadvantages greater than her advantages. All of value she would have brought him he could get for himself, and she would have been troublesome—exacting, disputing his sway, demanding full value or more in return for the love she was giving with such exalted notions of its worth.

"You are married?" Galloway suddenly said, interrupting his own speech and Norman's thought.

"Yes," said Norman.

"Just married, I believe?"

"Just."

Young and old, high and low, successful and failed, we are a race of advice-givers. As for Galloway, he was not one to neglect that showy form of inexpensive benevolence. "Have plenty of children," said he.

"And keep your family in the country till they grow up. Town's no place for women. They go crazy. Women—and most men—have no initiative. They think only about whatever's thrust at them. In the country it'll be their children and domestic things. In town it'll be getting and spending money."

Norman was struck by this. "I think I'll take your advice," said he.

"A man's home ought to be a retreat, not an inn. We are humoring the women too much. They are forgetting who earns what they spend in exhibiting themselves. If a woman wants that sort of thing, let her get out and earn it. Why should she expect it from the man who has undertaken her support because he wanted a wife to take care of his house and a mother for his children? If a woman doesn't like the job, all right. But if she takes it and accepts its pay, why, she should do its work."

"Flawless logic," said Norman.

"When I hire a man to work, he doesn't expect to idle about showing other people how handsome he is in the clothes my money pays for. Not that marriage is altogether a business—not at all. But, my dear sir—" And Galloway brought his cane down with the emphasis of one speaking from a heart full of bitter experience—"unless it is a business at bottom, organized and conducted on sound business principles, there's no sentiment either. We are human beings—and that means

we are first of all *business* beings, engaged in getting food, clothing, shelter. No sentiment—*no* sentiment, sir, is worth while that isn't firmly grounded. It's a house without a foundation. It's a steeple without a church under it."

Norman looked at the old man with calm penetrating eyes. "I shall conduct my married life on a sound, business basis, or not at all," said he.

"We'll see," said Galloway. "That's what *I* said forty years ago— No, I didn't. I had no sense about such matters then. In my youth the men knew nothing about the woman question." He smiled grimly. "I see signs that they are learning."

Then as abruptly as he had left the affairs he was there to discuss he returned to them. His mind seemed to have freed itself of all irrelevancy and superfluity, as a stream often runs from a faucet with much spluttering and rather muddy at first, then steadies and clears. Norman gave him the attention one can get only from a good mind that is interested in the subject and understands it thoroughly. Such attention not merely receives the words and ideas as they fall from the mouth of him who utters them, but also seems to draw them by a sort of suction faster and in greater abundance. It was this peculiar ability of giving attention, as much as any other one quality, that gave Norman's clients their confidence in him. Galloway, than whom no man was shrewder judge of men, showed in his gratified eyes

and voice, long before he had finished, how strongly his conviction of Norman's high ability was confirmed.

When Galloway ended, Norman rapidly and in clear and simple sentences summarized what Galloway had said. "That is right?" he asked.

"Precisely," said Galloway admiringly. "What a gift of clear statement you have, young man!"

"It has won me my place," said Norman. "As to your campaign, I can tell you now that the legal part of it can be arranged. That is what the law is for—to enable a man to do whatever he wants. The penalties are for those who have the stupidity to try to do things in an unlawful way."

Galloway laughed. "I had heard that they were for doing unlawful things."

"Nothing is unlawful," said Norman, "except in method."

"That's an interesting view of courts of justice."

"But we have no courts of justice. We have only courts of law."

Galloway threw back his head and laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks. "What a gift for clear statement!" he cried.

Norman beamed appreciation of a compliment so flattering. But he went back to business. "As I was saying, you can do what you want to do. You wish me to show you how. In our modern way of doing things, the relation of lawyer and client has somewhat

changed. To illustrate by this case, you are the bear with the taste for honey and the strength to rob the bees. I am the honey bird—that is, the modern lawyer —who can show you the way to the hive. Most of the honey birds—as yet—are content with a very small share of the honey—whatever the bear happens to be unable to find room for. But I—" Norman's eyes danced and his strong mouth curved in a charming smile —" I am a honey bird with a bear appetite."

Galloway was sitting up stiffly. " I don't quite follow you, sir," he said.

" Yet I am plain enough. My ability at clear statement has not deserted me. If I show you the way through the tangled forest of the law to this hive you scent—I must be a partner in the honey."

Galloway rose. " Your conceptions of your profession—and of me, I may say—are not attractive. I have always been, and am willing and anxious to pay liberally—more liberally than anyone else—for legal advice. But my business, sir, is my own."

Norman rose, his expression one of apology and polite disappointment. " I see I misunderstood your purpose in coming to me," said he. " Let us take no more of each other's time."

" And what did you think my object was in coming? " demanded Galloway.

" To get from me what you realized you could get nowhere else—which meant, as an old experienced trader

like you must have known, that you were ready to pay my price. Of course, if you can get elsewhere the assistance you need, why, you would be most unwise to come to me."

Galloway moved toward the door. "And you might have charged practically any fee you wished," said he, laughing satirically. "Young man, you are making the mistake that is ruining this generation. You wish to get rich all at once. You are not willing to be patient and to work and to build your fortune solidly and slowly."

Norman smiled as at a good joke. "What an asset to you strong men has been the vague hope in the minds of the masses that each poor devil of them will have his turn to loot and grow rich. I used to think ignorance kept the present system going. But I have discovered that it is that sly, silly, corrupt hope. But, sir, it does not catch me. I shall not work for you and the other strong men, and patiently wait my turn that would never come. My time is *now*."

"You threaten me!" cried Galloway furiously.

"Threaten you?" exclaimed Norman, amazed.

"You think, because I have given you, my lawyer, my secrets, that you can compel me——"

With an imperious gesture Norman stopped him. "Good day, sir," he said haughtily. "Your secrets are safe with me. I am a lawyer, not a financier."

Galloway was disconcerted. "I beg your pardon,

Mr. Norman," he said. "I misunderstood you. I thought I heard you say in effect that you purposed to be rich, and that you purposed to compel me to make you so."

"So I did," replied Norman. "But not by the methods you financiers are so adept at using. Not by high-class blackmail and blackjacking. I meant that my abilities were such that you and your fellow masters of modern society would be compelled to employ me on my own terms. A few moments ago you outlined to me a plan. It may be you can find other lawyers competent to steer it through the channel of the law. I doubt it. I may exaggerate my value. But—" He smiled pleasantly—"I don't think so."

In this modern world of ours there is no more delicate or more important branch of the art of material success than learning to play one's own tune on the trumpets of fame. To those who watch careers intelligently and critically, and not merely with mouth agape and ears awag for whatever sounds the winds of credulity bear, there is keen interest in noting how differently this high art is practiced by the fame-seekers—how well some modest heroes disguise themselves before essaying the trumpet, how timidly some play, how brazenly others. It is an art of infinite variety. How many there are who can echo Shakespeare's sad lament, through Hamlet's lips—"I lack advancement!" Those are they who have wholly neglected, as did Shakespeare, this

essential part of the art of advancement—Shakespeare, who lived almost obscure and was all but forgotten for two centuries after his death.

Norman, frankly seeking mere material success, and with the colossal egotism that disdains egotism and shrugs at the danger of being accused of it—Norman did not hesitate to proclaim his own merits. He reasoned that he had the wares, that crying them would attract attention to them, that he whose attention was attracted, if he were a judge of wares and a seeker of the best, would see that the Norman wares were indeed as Norman cried them. At first blush Galloway was amused by Norman's candid self-esteem. But he had often heard of Norman's conceit—and in a long and busy life he had not seen an able man who was unaware of his ability; any more than he had seen a pretty woman unaware of her prettiness. So, at second blush, Galloway was tempted by Norman's calm strong blast upon his own trumpet to look again at the wares.

"I always have had a high opinion of you, young man," said he, with laughing eyes. "Almost as high an opinion as you have of yourself. Think over the legal side of my plan. When you get your thoughts in order, let me know—and make me a proposition as to your own share. Does that satisfy you?"

"It's all I ask," said Norman.

And they parted on the friendliest terms—and Norman knew that his fortune was assured, if Galloway

lived another nine months. When he was alone, the sweat burst out upon him and, trembling from head to foot, he locked his door and flung himself at full length upon the rug. It was half an hour before the fit of silent hysterical reaction passed sufficiently to let him gather strength to rise. He tottered to his desk chair, and sat with his head buried in his arms upon the desk. After a while the telephone at his side rang insistently. He took the receiver in a hand he could not steady.

"Yes?" he called.

"It's Tetlow. How'd you come out?"

"Oh—" He paused to stiffen his throat to attack the words naturally—"all right. We go ahead."

"With G.?"

"Certainly. But keep quiet. Don't let him know you've heard, if you see him or he sends for you. Remember, it's in my hands entirely."

"Trust me." Tetlow's voice, suppressed and jubilant, suggested a fat, hoarse rooster trying to finish a crow before a coming stone from a farm boy reaches him. "It seems natural and easy to you, old man. But I'm about crazy with joy. I'll come right over."

"No. I'm going home."

"Can't I see you there?"

"No. I've other matters to attend to. Come about lunch time to-morrow—to the office, here."

"All right," said Tetlow disappointedly, and Norman rang off.

XX

In the faces of men who have dominion of whatever kind over their fellow men—be it the brutal rule of the prize fighter over his gang or the apparently gentle sway of the apparently meek bishop over his loving flock—in the faces of all men of power there is a dangerous look. They may never lose their tempers. They may never lift their voices. They may be ever suave and civil. The dangerous look is there—and the danger behind it. And the sense of that look and of its cause has a certain restraining effect upon all but the hopelessly impudent or solidly dense. Norman was one of the men without fits of temper. In his moments of irritation, no one ever felt that a storm of violent language might be impending. But the danger signal flaunted from his face. Danger of what? No one could have said. Most people would have laughed at the idea that so even tempered a man, pleased with himself and with the world, could ever be dangerous. Yet everyone had instinctively respected that danger flag—until Dorothy.

Perhaps it had struck for her—had really not been there when she looked at him. Perhaps she had been

too inexperienced, perhaps too self-centered, to see it. Perhaps she had never before seen his face in an hour of weariness and relaxation—when the true character, the dominating and essential trait or traits, shows nakedly upon the surface, making the weak man or woman look pitiful, the strong man or woman formidable.

However that may be, when he walked into the sitting room, greeted her placidly and kissed her on the brow, she, glancing uncertainly up at him, saw that danger signal for the first time. She studied his face, her own face wearing her expression of the puzzled child. No, not quite that expression as it always had been theretofore, but a modified form of it. To any self-centered, self-absorbed woman—there comes in her married life, unless she be married to a booby, a time, an hour, a moment even—for it can be narrowed down to a point—when she takes her first *seeing* look at the man upon whom she is dependent for protection, whether spiritual or material, or both. In her egotism and vanity she has been regarding him as her property. Suddenly, and usually disagreeably, it has been revealed to her that she is his property. That hour had come for Dorothy Norman. And she was looking at her husband, was wondering who and what he was.

"You've had your lunch?" he said.

"No," replied she.

"You have been out for the air?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You didn't tell me what to do."

He smiled good humoredly. "Oh, you had no money."

"Yes—a little. But I—" She halted.

"Yes?"

"You hadn't told me what to do," she repeated, as if on mature thought that sentence expressed the whole matter.

He felt in his pockets, found a small roll of bills. He laid twenty-five dollars on the table. "I'll keep thirty," he said, "as I shan't have any more till I see Tetlow to-morrow. Now, fly out and amuse yourself. I'm going to sleep. Don't wake me till you're ready for dinner."

And he went into his bedroom and closed the door. When he awoke, he saw that it was dark outside, and some note in the din of street noises from far below made him feel that it was late. He wrapped a bath-robe round him, opened the door into the sitting room. It was dark.

"Dorothy!" he called.

"Yes," promptly responded the small quiet voice, so near that he started back.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, and switched on the light. "There you are—by the window. What were you doing, in the dark?"

She was dressed precisely as when he had last seen

her. She was sitting with her hands listless in her lap and her face a moving and beautiful expression of melancholy dreams. On the table were the bills—where he had laid them. "You've been out?" he said.

"No," she replied.

"Why not?"

"I've been—waiting."

"For what?" laughed he.

"For—I don't know," she replied. "Just waiting."

"But there's nothing to wait for."

She looked at him interrogatively. "No—I suppose not," she said.

He went back into his room and glanced at his watch. "Eleven o'clock!" he cried. "Why didn't you wake me? You must be nearly starved."

"Yes, I *am* hungry," said she.

Her patient, passive resignation irritated him. "I'm ravenous," he said. "I'll dress—and you dress, too. We'll go downstairs to supper."

When he reappeared in the sitting room, in a dinner jacket, she was again seated near the window, hands listless in her lap and eyes gazing dreamily into vacancy. But she was now dressed in the black chiffon and the big black hat. He laughed. "You are prompt and obedient," said he. "Nothing like hunger to subdue."

A faint flush tinged her lovely skin; the look of the child that has been struck appeared in her eyes.

He cast about in his mind for the explanation. Did she think he meant it was need that had brought her meekly back to him? That was true enough, but he had not intended to hint it. In high good humor because he was so delightfully hungry and was about to get food, he cried: "Do cheer up! There's nothing to be sad about—nothing."

She lifted her large eyes and gazed at him timidly. "What are you going to do with me?"

"Take you downstairs and feed you."

"But I mean—afterward?"

"Bring—or send—you up here to go to bed."

"Are you going away?"

"Where?"

"Away from me."

He looked at her with amused eyes. She was exquisitely lovely; never had he seen her lovelier. It delighted him to note her charms—the charms that had enslaved him—not a single charm missing—and to feel that he was no longer their slave, was his own master again.

A strange look swept across her uncannily mobile face—a look of wonder, of awe, of fear, of dread. "You don't even like me any more," she said in her colorless way.

"What have I done to make you think I dislike you?" said he pleasantly.

She gazed down in silence.

"You need have no fear," said he. "You are my wife. You will be well taken care of, and you will not be annoyed. What more can I say?"

"Thank you," she murmured.

He winced. She had made him feel like an unpleasant cross between an alms-giver and a bully. "Now," said he, with forced but resolute cheerfulness, "we will eat, drink and be merry."

On the way down in the elevator he watched her out of the corner of his eye. When they reached the hall leading to the supper room he touched her arm and halted her. "My dear," said he in the pleasant voice which yet somehow never failed to secure attention and obedience, "there will be some of my acquaintances in there at supper. I don't want them to see you with that whipped dog look. There's no occasion for it."

Her lip trembled. "I'll do my best," said she.

"Let's see you smile," laughed he. "You have often shown me that you know the woman's trick of wearing what feelings you choose on the outside. So don't pretend that you've got to look as if you were about to be hung for a crime you didn't commit. There!—that's better."

And indeed to a casual glance she looked the happy bride trying—not very successfully—to seem used to her husband and her new status.

"Hold it!" he urged gayly. "I've no fancy for leading round a lovely martyr in chains. Especially as

you're about as healthy and well placed a person as I know. And you'll feel as well as you look when you've had something to eat."

Whether it was obedience or the result of a decision to drop an unprofitable pose he could not tell, but as soon as they were seated and she had a bill of fare before her and was reading it, her expression of happiness lost its last suggestion of being forced. "Crab meat!" she said. "I love it!"

"Two portions of crab meat," he said to the waiter with pad and pencil at attention.

"Oh, I don't want that much," she protested.

"You forget that *I* am hungry," rejoined he. "And when I am hungry, the price of food begins to go up." He addressed himself to the waiter: "After that a broiled grouse—with plenty of hominy—and grilled sweet potatoes—and a salad of endive and hothouse tomatoes—and I know the difference between hothouse tomatoes and the other kinds. Next—some cheese—Coullemières—yes, you have it—I got the steward to get it—and toasted crackers—the round kind, not the square—and not the hard ones that unsettle the teeth—and—what kind of ice, my dear?—or would you prefer a fresh peach flambee?"

"Yes—I think so," said Dorothy.

"You hear, waiter?—and a bottle of—there's the head waiter—ask him—he knows the champagne I like."

As Norman had talked, in the pleasant, insistent voice, the waiter had roused from the air of mindless, mechanical sloth characteristic of the New York waiter—unless and until a fee below his high expectation is offered. When he said the final "very good, sir," it was with the accent of real intelligence.

Dorothy was smiling, with the amusement of youth and inexperience. "What a lot of trouble you took about it," said she.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Anything worth doing at all is worth taking trouble about. You will see. We shall get results. The supper will be the best this house can put together."

"You can have anything you want in this world, if you only can pay for it," said she.

"That's what most people think," replied he. "But the truth is, the paying is only a small part of the art of getting what one wants."

She glanced nervously at him. "I'm beginning to realize that I'm dreadfully inexperienced," said she.

"There's nothing discouraging in that," said he. "Lack of experience can be remedied. But not lack of judgment. It takes the great gift of judgment to enable one to profit by mistakes, to decide what is the real lesson of an experience."

"I'm afraid I haven't any judgment, either," confessed she.

"That remains to be seen."

She hesitated—ventured: "What do you think is my worst fault?"

He shook his head laughingly. "We are going to have a happy supper."

"Do you think I am very vain?" persisted she.

"Who's been telling you so?"

"Mr. Tetlow. He gave me an awful talking to, just before I—" She paused at the edge of the forbidden ground. "He didn't spare me," she went on. "He said I was a vain, self-centered little fool."

"And what did you say?"

"I was very angry. I told him he had no right to accuse me of that. I reminded him that he had never heard me say a word about myself."

"And did he say that the vainest people were just that way—never speaking of themselves, never thinking of anything else?"

"Oh, he told you what he said," cried she.

"No," laughed he.

She reddened. "*You* think I'm vain?"

He made a good-humoredly satirical little bow. "I think you are charming," said he. "It would be a waste of time to look at or to think of anyone else when oneself is the most charming and interesting person in the world. Still—" He put into his face and voice a suggestion of gravity that caught her utmost attention—"if one is to get anywhere, is to win consideration from others—and happiness for oneself—one sim-

ply must do a little thinking about others—occasionally."

Her eyes lowered. A faint color tinged her cheeks.

"The reason most of us are so uncomfortable—downright unhappy most of the time—is that we never really take our thoughts off our precious fascinating selves. The result is that some day we find that the liking—and friendship—and love—of those around us has limits—and we are left severely alone. Of course, if one has a great deal of money, one can buy excellent imitations of liking and friendship and even love—I ought to say, especially love——"

The color flamed in her face.

"But," he went on, "if one is in modest circumstances or poor, one has to take care."

"Or dependent," she said, with one of those unexpected flashes of subtle intelligence that so complicated the study of her character. He had been talking to amuse himself rather than with any idea of her understanding. Her sudden bright color and her two words—"or dependent"—roused him to see that she thought he was deliberately giving her a savage lecture from the cover of general remarks. "With the vanity of the typical woman," he said to himself, "she always imagines *she* is the subject of everyone's thought and talk."

"Or dependent," said he to her, easily. "I wasn't thinking of you, but yours *is* a case in point. Come,

now—nothing to look blue about! Here's something to eat. No, it's for the next table."

"You won't let me explain," she protested, between the prudence of reproach and the candor of anger.

"There's nothing to explain," replied he. "Don't bother about the mistakes of yesterday. Remember them—yes. If one has a good memory, to forget is impossible—not to say unwise. But there ought to be no more heat or sting in the memory of past mistakes than in the memory of last year's mosquito bites."

The first course of the supper arrived. Her nervousness vanished, and he got far away from the neighborhood of the subjects that, even in remotest hint, could not but agitate her. And as the food and the wine asserted their pacific and beatific sway, she and he steadily moved into better and better humor with each other. Her beauty grew until it had him thinking that never, not in the most spiritual feminine conceptions of the classic painters, had he seen a loveliness more ethereal. Her skin was so exquisite, the coloring of her hair and eyes and of her lips was so delicately fine that it gave her the fragility of things bordering upon the supernal—of rare exotics, of sunset and moonbeam effects. No, he had been under no spell of illusion as to her beauty. It was a reality—the more fascinating because it waxed and waned not with regularity of period but capriciously.

He began to look round furtively, to see what effect

this wife of his was producing on others. These last few months, through prudence as much as through pride, he had been cultivating the habit of ignoring his surroundings; he would not invite cold salutations or obvious avoidance of speaking. He now discovered many of his former associates—and his vanity dilated as he noted how intensely they were interested in his wife.

Some men of ability have that purest form of egotism which makes one profoundly content with himself, genuinely indifferent to the approval or the disapproval of others. Norman's vanity had a certain amount of alloy. He genuinely disdained his fellow-men—their timidity, their hypocrisy, their servility, their limited range of ideas. He was indifferent to the verge of insensibility as to their adverse criticism. But at the same time it was necessary to his happiness that he get from them evidences of their admiration and envy. With that amusing hypocrisy which tinges all human nature, he concealed from himself the satisfaction, the joy even, he got out of the showy side of his position. And no feature of his infatuation for Dorothy surprised him so much as the way it rode rough shod and reckless over his snobbishness.

With the fading of infatuation had come many reflections upon the practical aspects of what he had done. It pleased him with himself to find that, in this first test, he had not the least regret, but on the con-

trary a genuine pride in the courageous independence he had shown—another and strong support to his conviction of his superiority to his fellow-men. He might be somewhat snobbish—who was not?—who else in his New York was less than supersaturated with snobbishness? But snobbishness, the determining quality in the natures of all the women and most of the men he knew, had shown itself one of the incidental qualities in his own nature. After all, reflected he, it took a man, a good deal of a man, to do what he had done, and not to regret it, even in the hour of disillusionment. And it must be said for this egotistic self-approval of his that like all his judgments there was sound merit of truth in it. The vanity of the nincompoop is ridiculous. The vanity of the man of ability is amusing and no doubt due to a defective point of view upon the proportions of the universe; but it is not without excuse, and those who laugh might do well to discriminate even as they guffaw.

Looking discreetly about, Norman was suddenly confronted by the face of Josephine Burroughs, only two tables away.

Until their eyes squarely met he did not know she was there, or even in America. Before he could make a beginning of glancing away, she gave him her sweetest smile and her friendliest bow. And Dorothy, looking to see to whom he was speaking, was astonished to receive the same radiance of cordiality. Norman was

pleased at the way his wife dealt with the situation. She returned both bow and smile in her own quiet, slightly reserved way of gentle dignity.

"Who was that, speaking?" asked she.

"Miss Burroughs. You must remember her."

He noted it as characteristic that she said, quite sincerely: "Oh, so it is. I didn't remember her. That is the girl you were engaged to."

"Yes—'the nice girl uptown,'" said he.

"I didn't like her," said Dorothy, with evident small interest in the subject. "She was vain."

"You mean you didn't like her way of being vain," suggested Norman. "Everyone is vain; so, if we disliked for vanity we should dislike everyone."

"Yes, it was her way. And just now she spoke to us both, as if she were doing us a favor."

"Gracious, it's called," said he. "What of it? It does us no harm and gives her about the only happiness she's got."

Norman, without seeming to do so, noted the rest of the Burroughs party. At Josephine's right sat a handsome young foreigner, and it took small experience of the world to discover that he was paying court to her, and that she was pleased and flattered. Norman asked the waiter who he was, and learned that he came from the waiter's own province of France, was the Duc de Valdôme. At first glance Norman had thought him distinguished. Afterward he discriminated. There are

several kinds or degrees of distinction. There is distinction of race, of class, of family, of dress, of person. As Frenchman, as aristocrat, as a scion of the ancient family of Valdôme, as a specimen of tailoring and valeting, Miss Burroughs's young man was distinguished. But in his own proper person he was rather insignificant. The others at the table were Americans. Following Miss Burroughs's cue, they sought an opportunity to speak friendlily to Norman—and he gave it them. His acknowledgment of those effusive salutations was polite but restrained.

"They are friends of yours?" said Dorothy.

"They were," said he. "And they may be again—when they are friends of *ours*."

"I'm not very good at making friends," she warned him. "I don't like many people." This time her unconscious and profound egotism pleased him. Evidently it did not occur to her that she should be eager to be friends with those people on any terms, that the only question was whether they would receive her.

She asked: "Why was Miss—Miss Burroughs so friendly?"

"Why shouldn't she be?"

"But I thought you threw her over."

He winced at this crude way of putting it. "On the contrary, she threw me over."

Dorothy laughed incredulously. "I know better. Mr. Tetlow told me."

"She threw me over," repeated he coldly. "Tetlow was repeating malicious and ignorant gossip."

Dorothy laughed again—it was her second glass of champagne. "You say that because it's the honorable thing to say. But I know."

"I say it because it's true," said he.

He spoke quietly, but if she had drunk many more than two glasses of an unaccustomed and heady liquor she would have felt his intonation. She paled and shrank and her slim white fingers fluttered nervously at the collar of her dress. "I was only joking," she murmured.

He laughed good-naturedly. "Don't look as if I had given you a whipping," said he. "Surely you're not afraid of me."

She glanced shyly at him, a smile dancing in her eyes and upon her lips. "Yes," she said. And after a pause she added: "I didn't used to be. But that was because I didn't know you—or much of anything." The smile irradiated her whole face. "You used to be afraid of me. But you aren't, any more."

"No," said he, looking straight at her. "No, I'm not."

"I always told you you were mistaken in what you thought of me. I really don't amount to much. A man as serious and as important as you are couldn't—couldn't care about me."

"It's true you don't amount to much, as yet," said

he. "And if you never do amount to much, you'd be no less than most women and most men. But I've an idea —at times—that you *could* amount to something."

He saw that he had wounded her vanity, that her protestations of humility were precisely what he had suspected. He laughed at her: "I see you thought I'd contradict you. But I can't afford to be so amiable now. And the first thing you've got to get rid of is the part of your vanity that prevents you from growing. Vanity of belief in one's possibilities is fine. No one gets anywhere without it. But vanity of belief in one's present perfection—no one but a god could afford that luxury."

Observing her closely he was amused—and pleased —to note that she was struggling to compose herself to endure his candors as a necessary part of the duties and obligations she had taken on herself when she gave up and returned to him.

"What *you* thought of *me* used to be the important thing in our relations," he went on, in his way of raillery that took all or nearly all the sting out of what he said, but none of its strength. "Now, the important thing is what I think of you. You are much younger than I, especially in experience. You are going to school to life with me as teacher. You'll dislike the teacher for the severity of the school. That isn't just, but it's natural—perhaps inevitable. And please—my dear—when you are bitterest over what *you* have to put up

with from *me*—don't forget what *I* have to put up with from *you*."

She was fighting bravely against angry tears. As for him, he had suddenly become indifferent to what the people around them might be thinking. With all his old arrogance come back in full flood, he was feeling that he would live his own life in his own way and that those who didn't approve—yes, including Dorothy—might do as they saw fit. She said:

"I don't blame you for regretting that you didn't marry Miss Burroughs."

"But I don't regret it," replied he. "On the contrary, I'm glad."

She glanced hopefully at him. But the hopeful expression faded as he went on:

"Whether or not I made a mistake in marrying you, I certainly had an escape from disaster when she decided she preferred a foreigner and a title. There's a good sensible reason why so many girls of her class—more and more all the time—marry abroad. They are not fit to be the wives of hard-working American husbands. In fact I've about reached the conclusion that of the girls growing up nowdays very few in any class are fit to be American wives. They're not big enough. They're too coarse and crude in their tastes. They're only fit for the shallow, showy sort of thing—and the European aristocracy is their hope—and their place."

Her small face had a fascinating expression of a

"At Josephine's right sat a handsome young foreigner."

child trying to understand things far beyond its depth. He was interested in his own thoughts, however, and went on—for, if he had been in the habit of stopping when his hearers failed to understand, or when they misunderstood, either he would have been silent most of the time in company or his conversation would have been as petty and narrow and devoid of originality or imagination as is the mentality of most human beings—as is the talk and reading that impress them as interesting—and profound!

"The American man of the more ambitious sort," he went on, "either has to live practically if not physically apart from his wife or else has to educate some not too difficult woman to be his wife."

She understood that. "You are really going to educate me?" she said, with an arch smile. Now that Norman had her attention, now that she was centering upon him instead of upon herself, she was interested in him, and in what he said, whether she understood it or not, whether it pleased her vanity or wounded it. The intellects of women work to an unsuspected extent only through the sex charm. Their appreciations of books, of art, of men are dependant, often in the most curious indirect ways, upon the fact that the author, the artist, the politician or what not is betrousered. Thus, Dorothy was patient, respectful, attentive, was not offended by Norman's didactic way of giving her the lessons in life. Her smile was

happy as well as coquettish, as she asked him to educate her.

He returned her smile. "That depends," answered he.

"You're not sure I'm worth the trouble?"

"You may put it that way, if you like. But I'd say, rather, I'm not sure I can spare the time—and you're not sure you care to fit yourself for the place."

"Oh, but I do!" cried she.

"We'll see—in a few weeks or months," replied he.

The Burroughs party were rising. Josephine had choice of two ways to the door. She chose the one that took her past Norman and his bride. She advanced, beaming. Norman rose, took her extended hand. Said she:

"So glad to see you." Then, turning the radiant smile upon Dorothy, "And is this your wife? Is this the pretty little typewriter girl?"

Dorothy nodded—a charming, ingenuous bend of the head. Norman felt a thrill of pride in her, so beautifully unconscious of the treacherous attempt at insult. It particularly delighted him that she had not made the mistake of rising to return Josephine's greeting but had remained seated. Surely this wife of his had the right instincts that never fail to cause right manners. For Josephine's benefit, he gazed down at Dorothy with the proudest, fondest eyes. "Yes—this is she," said he. "Can you blame me?"

Josephine paled and winced visibly, as if the blow she had aimed at him had, after glancing off harmlessly, returned to crush her. She touched Dorothy's proffered hand, murmured a few stammering phrases of vague compliment, rejoined her friends. Said Dorothy, when she and Norman were settled again:

"I shall never like her. Nor she me."

"But you do like this cheese? Waiter, another bottle of that same."

"Why did she put you in such a good humor?" inquired his wife.

"It wasn't she. It was you!" replied he. But he refused to explain.

XXI

Galloway accepted Norman's terms. He would probably have accepted terms far less easy. But Norman as yet knew with the thoroughness which must precede intelligent plan and action only the legal side of financial operations; he had been as indifferent to the commercial side as a pilot to the value of the cargo in the ship he engages to steer clear of shoals and rocks. So with the prudence of the sagacious man's audacities he contented himself with a share of this first venture that would simply make a comfortable foundation for the fortune he purposed to build. As the venture could not fail outright, even should Galloway die, he rented a largish place at Hempstead, with the privilege of purchase, and installed his wife and himself with a dozen servants and a housekeeper.

"This housekeeper, this Mrs. Lowell," said he to Dorothy, "is a good enough person as housekeepers go. But you will have to look sharply after her."

Dorothy seemed to fade and shrink within herself, which was her way of confessing lack of courage and fitness to face a situation: "I don't know anything about those things," she confessed.

"I understand perfectly," said he. "But you learned something at the place in Jersey City—quite enough for the start. Really, all you need to know just now is whether the place is clean or not, and whether the food comes on the table in proper condition. The rest you'll pick up gradually."

"I hope so," said she, looking doubtful and helpless; these new magnitudes were appalling, especially now that she was beginning to get a point of view upon life.

"At any rate, don't bother me for these few next months," said he. "I'm going to be very busy—shall leave early in the morning and not be back until near dinner time—if I come at all. No, you'll not be annoyed by me. You'll be absolute mistress of your time."

She tried to look as if this contented her. But he could not have failed to see how dissatisfied and disquieted she really was. He had the best of reasons for thinking that she was living under the same roof with him only because she preferred the roof he could provide to such a one as she could provide for herself whether by her own earnings or by marrying a man more to her liking personally. Yet here she was, piqued and depressed because of his indifference—because he was not thrusting upon her gallantries she would tolerate only through prudence!

"You will be lonely at times, I'm afraid," said he. "But I can't provide friends or even acquaintances for

you for several months—until my affairs are in better order and my sister and her husband come back from Europe."

"Oh, I shan't be lonely," cried she. "I've never cared for people."

"You've your books, and your music—and riding—and shopping trips to town—and the house and grounds to look after."

"Yes—and my dreams," said she hopefully, her eyes suggesting the dusky star depths.

"Oh—the dreams. You'll have little time for them," said he drily. "And little inclination, I imagine, as you wake up to the sense of how much there is to be learned. Dreaming is the pastime of people who haven't the intelligence or the energy to accomplish anything. If you wish to please me—and you do—don't you?"

"Yes," she murmured. She forced her rebellious lips to the laconic assent. She drooped the lids over her rebellious eyes, lest he should detect her wounded feelings and her resentment.

"I assumed so," said he, with a secret smile. "Well, if you wish to please me, you'll give your time to practical things—things that'll make you more interesting and make us both more comfortable. It was all very well to dream, while you had little to do and small opportunity. But now— Try to cut it out."

It is painful to an American girl of any class to find that she has to earn her position as wife. The

current theory, a tradition from an early and woman-revering day, is that the girl has done her share and more when she has consented to the suit of the ardent male and has intrusted her priceless charms to his exclusive keeping. According to that same theory, it is the husband who must earn his position—must continue to earn it. He is a humble creature, honored by the presence of a wonderful being, a cross between a queen and a goddess. He cannot do enough to show his gratitude. Perhaps—but only perhaps—had Norman married Josephine Burroughs, he might have assented, after a fashion, to this idea of the relations of the man and the woman. No doubt, had he remained under the spell of Dorothy's mystery and beauty, he would have felt and acted the slave he had made of himself at the outset. But in the circumstances he was looking at their prospective life together with sane eyes. And so she had, in addition to all her other reasons for heartache, a sense that she, the goddess-queen, the American woman, with the birthright of dominion over the male, was being cheated, humbled, degraded.

At first he saw that this sense of being wronged made it impossible for her to do anything at all toward educating herself for her position. But time brought about the change he had hoped for. A few weeks, and she began to cheer up, almost in spite of herself. What was the use in sulking or sighing or in self-pitying, when it brought only unhappiness to oneself? The

coarse and brutal male in the case was either unaware or indifferent. There was no one and no place to fly to—unless she wished to be much worse off than her darkest mood of self-pity represented her to her sorrowing self. The housekeeper, Mrs. Lowell, was a "broken down gentlewoman" who had been chastened by misfortune into a wholesome state of practical good sense about the relative values of the real and the romantic. Mrs. Lowell diagnosed the case of the young wife—as Norman had shrewdly guessed she would—and was soon adroitly showing her the many advantages of her lot. Before they had been three months at Hempstead, Dorothy had discovered that she, in fact, was without a single ground for serious complaint. She had a husband who was generous about money, and left her as absolutely alone as if he were mere occasional visitor at the house. She had her living—and such a living!—she had plenty of interesting occupation—she had not a single sordid care—and perfect health.

The dreams, too— It was curious about those dreams. She would now have found it an intolerable bore to sit with hands idle in her lap and eyes upon vacancy, watching the dim, luminous shadows flit aimlessly by. Yet that was the way she used to pass hours—entire days. She used to fight off sleep at night the longer to enjoy her one source of pure happiness. There was no doubt about it, the fire of romance was burning low, and she was becoming commonplace, practical, resigned.

Well, why not? Was not life over for her?—that is, the life a girl's fancy longs for. In place of hope of romance, there was an uneasy feeling of a necessity of pleasing this husband of hers—of making him comfortable. What would befall her if she neglected trying to please him or if she, for all her trying, failed? She did not look far in that direction. Her uneasiness remained indefinite—yet definite enough to keep her working from waking until bedtime. And she dropped into the habit of watching his face with the same anxiety with which a farmer watches the weather. When he happened one day to make a careless, absent-minded remark in disapproval of something in the domestic arrangements, she was thrown into such a nervous flutter that he observed it.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Nothing—nothing," replied she in the hurried tone of one who is trying hastily to cover his thoughts.

He reflected, understood, burst into a fit of hearty laughter. "So, you are trying to make a bogey of me?"

She colored, protested faintly.

"Don't you know I'm about the least tyrannical, least exacting person in the world?"

"You've been very patient with me," said she.

"Now—now," cried he in a tone of raillery, "you might as well drop that. Don't you know there's no reason for being afraid of me?"

"Yes, I *know* it," replied she. "But I *feel* afraid, just the same. I can't help it."

It was impossible for him to appreciate the effect of his personality upon others—how, without his trying or even wishing, it made them dread a purely imaginary displeasure and its absurdly imaginary consequences. But this confession of hers was not the first time he had heard of the effect of potential and latent danger he had upon those associated with him. And, as it was most useful, he was not sorry that he had it. He made no further attempt to convince her that he was harmless. He knew that he was harmless where she was concerned. Was it not just as well that she should not know it, when vaguely dreading him was producing excellent results? As with a Christian the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, so with a wife the fear of her husband was the beginning of wisdom. In striving to please him, to fit herself for the position of wife, she was using up the time she would otherwise have spent in making herself miserable with self-pity—that supreme curse of the idle both male and female, that most prolific of the breeders of unhappy wives. Yes, wives were unhappy not because their husbands neglected them, for busy people have no time to note whether they are neglected or not, but because they gave their own worthless, negligent, incapable selves too much attention.

One evening, she, wearing the look of the timid but

resolute intruder, came into his room while he was dressing for dinner and hung about with an air no man of his experience could fail to understand.

"Something wrong about the house?" said he finally. "Need more money?"

"No—nothing," she replied, with a slight flush. He saw that she was mustering all her courage for some grand effort. He waited, only mildly curious, as his mind was busy with some new business he and Tetlow had undertaken. Presently she stood squarely before him, her hands behind her back and her face upturned. "Won't you kiss me?" she said.

"Sure!" said he. And he kissed her on the cheek and resumed operations with his military brushes.

"I didn't mean that—that kind of a kiss," said she dejectedly.

He paused with a quick characteristic turn of the head, looked keenly at her, resumed his brushing. A quizzical smile played over his face. "Oh, I see," said he. "You've been thinking about duty. And you've decided to do yours. . . . Eh?"

"I think— It seems to me— I don't think—" she stammered, then said desperately, "I've not been acting right by you. I want to—to do better."

"That's good," said he briskly, with a nod of approval—and never a glance in her direction. "You think you'll let me have a kiss now and then—eh? All right, my dear."

"Oh, you *won't* understand me!" she cried, ready to weep with vexation.

"You mean I won't misunderstand you," replied he amiably, as he set about fixing his tie. "You've been mulling things over in your mind. You've decided I'm secretly pining for you. You've resolved to be good and kind and dutiful—generous—to feed old dog Tray a few crumbs now and then. . . . That's nice and sweet of you—" He paused until the crisis in tying was passed—"very nice and sweet of you—but—There's nothing in it. All I ask of you for myself is to see that I'm comfortable—that Mrs. Lowell and the servants treat me right. If I don't like anything, I'll speak out—never fear."

"But—Fred—I want to be your wife—I really do," she pleaded.

He turned on her, and his eyes seemed to pierce into the chamber of her thoughts. "Drop it, my dear," he said quietly. "Neither of us is in love with the other. So there's not the slightest reason for pretending. If I ever want to be free of you, I'll tell you so. If you ever want to get rid of me, all you have to do is to ask—and it'll be arranged. Meanwhile, let's enjoy ourselves."

His good humor, obviously unfeigned, would have completely discouraged a more experienced woman, though as vain as Dorothy and with as much ground as he had given her for self-confidence where he was

concerned. But Dorothy was depressed rather than profoundly discouraged. A few moments and she found courage to plead: "But you used to care for me. Don't I attract you any more?"

"You say that quite pathetically," said he, in good-humored amusement. "I'm willing to do anything within reason for your happiness. But really—just to please your vanity I can't make myself over again into the fool I used to be about you. You'd hate it yourself. Why, then, this pathetic air?"

"I feel so useless—and as if I were shirking," she persisted. "And if you did care for me, it wouldn't offend me now as it used to. I've grown much wiser—more sensible. I understand things—and I look at them differently. And—I always did *like* you."

"Even when you despised me?" mocked he. It irritated him a little vividly to recall what a consummate fool he had made of himself for her, even though he had every reason to be content with the event of his folly.

"A girl always thinks she despises a man when she can do as she pleases with him," replied she. "As Mr. Tetlow said, I was a fool."

"*I* was the fool," said he. "Where did that man of mine lay the handkerchief?"

"I, too," cried she, eagerly. "You were foolish to bother about a little silly like me. But, oh, what a *fool* I was not to realize——"

"You're not trying to tell me you're in love with me?" said he sharply.

"Oh, no—no, indeed," she protested in haste, alarmed by his overwhelming manner. "I'm not trying to deceive you in any way."

"Never do," said he. "It's the one thing I can't stand."

"But I thought—it seemed to me—" she persisted, "that perhaps if we tried to—to care for each other, we'd maybe get to—to caring—more or less. Don't you think so?"

"Perhaps," was his careless reply. He added, "But I, for one, am well content with things as they are. I confess I don't look back with any satisfaction on those months when I was making an ass of myself about you. I was ruining my career. Now I'm happy, and everything is going fine in my business. No experiments, if you please." He shook his head, looking at her with smiling raillery. "It might turn out that I'd care for you in the same crazy way again, and that you didn't like it. Again you might get excited about me and I'd remain calm about you. That would give me a handsome revenge, but I'm not looking for revenge."

He finished his toilet, she standing quiet and thoughtful in an attitude of unconscious grace.

"No, my dear," resumed he, as he prepared to descend for dinner, "let's have a peaceful, cheerful mar-

ried life, with no crazy excitements. Let's hang on to what we've got, and take no unnecessary risks." He patted her on the shoulder. "Isn't that sensible?"

She looked at him with serious, appealing eyes. "You are *sure* you aren't unhappy?"

It was amusing to him—though he concealed it—to see how tenaciously her feminine egotism held to the idea that she was the important person. And, when women of experience thus deluded themselves, it was not at all strange that this girl should be unable to grasp the essential truth as to the relations of men and women—that, while a woman who makes her sex her profession must give to a man, to some man, a dominant place in her life, a man need give a woman—at least, any one woman—little or no place. But he would not wantonly wound her harmless vanity. "Don't worry about me, please," said he in the kindest, friendliest way. "I am telling you the truth."

And they descended to the dining room. Usually he was preoccupied and she did most of the talking—not a difficult matter for her, as she was one of those who by nature have much to say, who talk on and on, giving lively, pleasant recitals of commonplace daily happenings. That evening it was her turn to be abstracted, or, at least, silent. He talked volubly, torrentially, like a man of teeming mind in the highest spirits. And he was in high spirits. The Galloway enterprise had developed into a huge success; also, it

did not lessen his sense of the pleasantness of life to have learned that his wife was feeling about as well disposed toward him as he cared to have her feel, had come round to that state of mind which he, as a practical man, wise in the art of life, regarded as ideal for a wife.

A successful man, with a quiet and comfortable home, well enough looked after by an agreeable wife, exceeding good to look at and interested only in her home and her husband—what more could a man ask?

What more could a man ask? Only one thing more —a baby. The months soon passed and that rounding out of the home side of his life was consummated with no mishap. The baby was a girl, which contented him and delighted Dorothy. He wished it to be named after her, she preferred his sister's name—Ursula. It was Ursula who decided the question. "She looks like you, Fred," she declared, after an earnest scanning of the wierd little face. "Why not call her Frederica?"

Norman thought this clumsy, but Dorothy instantly assented—and the baby was duly christened Frederica.

Perhaps it was because he was having less pressing business in town, but whatever the reason, he began to stay at home more—surprisingly more. And, being at home, he naturally fell into the habit of fussing with the baby, he having the temperament that compels a man to

be always at something, and the baby being convenient and in the nature of a curiosity. Ursula, who was stopping in the house, did not try to conceal her amazement at this extraordinary development of her brother's character.

Said she: "I never before knew you to take the slightest interest in a child."

Said he: "I never before saw a child worth taking the slightest interest in."

"Oh, well," said Ursula, "it won't last. You'll soon grow tired of your plaything."

"Perhaps you're right," said Norman. "I hope you're wrong." He reflected, added: "In fact, I'm almost certain you're wrong. I'm too selfish to let myself lose such a pleasure. If you had observed my life closely, you'd have discovered that I have never given up a single thing I found a source of pleasure. That is good sense. That is why the superior sort of men and women retain something of the boy and the girl all their lives. I still like a lot of the games I played as a boy. For some years I've had no chance to indulge in them. I'll be glad when Rica is old enough to give me the chance again."

She was much amused. "Who'd have suspected that *you* were a born father!"

"Not I, for one," confessed he. "We never know what there is in us until circumstances bring it out."

"A devoted father and a doting husband," pursued

Ursula. "I must say I rather sympathize with you as a doting husband. Of course, I, a woman, can't see her as you do. I can't imagine a man—especially a man of your sort—going stark mad about a mere woman. But, as women go, I'll admit she is a good specimen. Not the marvel of intelligence and complex character you imagine, but still a good specimen. And physically—" She laughed— "*That's* what caught you. That's what holds you—and will hold you as long as it lasts."

"Was there ever a woman who didn't think that?—and didn't like to think it, though I believe many of them make strong pretense at scorning the physical." Fred was regarding his sister with a quizzical expression. "You approve of her?" he said.

"More than I'd have thought possible. And after I've taken her about in the world a while she'll be perfect."

"No doubt," said Norman. "But, alas, she'll never be perfect. For, you're not going to take her about."

"So she says when I talk of it to her," replied Ursula. "But I know you'll insist. You needn't be uneasy as to how she'll be received."

"I'm not," said Norman dryly.

"You've got back all you lost—and more. How we Americans do worship success!"

"Don't suggest to Dorothy anything further about society," said Norman. "I've no time or taste for it,

and I don't wish to be annoyed by intrusions into my home."

"But you'll not be satisfied always with just her," urged his sister. "Besides, you've got a position to maintain."

Norman's smile was cynically patient. "I want my home and I want my career," said he. "And I don't want any society nonsense. I had the good luck to marry a woman who knows and cares nothing about it. I don't purpose to give up the greatest advantage of my marriage."

Ursula was astounded. She knew the meaning of his various tones and manners, and his way of rejecting her plans for Dorothy—and, incidentally, for her own amusement—convinced her that he was through and through in earnest. "It will be dreadfully lonesome for her, Fred," she pleaded.

"We'll wait till that trouble faces us," replied he, not a bit impressed. "And—don't forget—not a word of temptation to her from you." This with an expression that warned her how well he knew her indirect ways of accomplishing what she could not gain directly.

"Oh, I shan't interfere," said she in a tone that made it a binding promise. "But you can't expect me to sympathize with your plans for an old-fashioned domestic life."

"Certainly not," said Norman. "You don't understand. Women of your sort never do. That's why

you're not fit to be the wives of men worth while. A serious man and a society woman can't possibly hit it off together. For a serious man the outside world is a place to work, and home is a place to rest. For a society woman, the world is a place to idle and home is a work shop, an entertainment factory. It's impossible to reconcile those two opposite ideas."

She saw his point at once, and it appealed to her intelligence. And she had his own faculty for never permitting prejudice to influence judgment. She said in a dubious tone, "Do you think Dorothy will sympathize with your scheme?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied he.

"If she doesn't—" Ursula halted there.

Her brother shrugged his shoulders. "If she proves to be the wrong sort of woman for me, she'll go her way and I mine."

"Why, I thought you loved her!"

"What have I said that leads you to change your mind?" said he.

"A man does not take the high hand with the woman he adores."

"So?" said Norman tranquilly.

"Well," said his puzzled sister by way of conclusion, "if you persist in being the autocrat——"

"Autocrat?—I?" laughed he. "Am I trying to compel her to do anything she doesn't wish to do? Didn't I say she would be free to go if she were dissatis-

fied with me and my plan—if she didn't adopt it gladly as her own plan, also?"

"But you know very well she's dependent upon you, Fred."

"Is that my fault? Does a man force a woman to become dependent? And just because she is dependent, should he therefore yield to her and let her make of his life a waste and a folly?"

"You're far too clever for me to argue with. Anyhow, as I was saying, if you persist in what I call tyranny——"

"When a woman cries tyranny, it means she's furious because she is not getting *her* autocratic way."

"Maybe so," admitted Ursula cheerfully. "At any rate, if you persist—unless she loves you utterly, your life will be miserable."

"She may make her own life miserable, but not mine," replied he. "If I were the ordinary man—counting himself lucky to have induced any woman to marry him—afraid if he lost his woman he'd not be able to get another—able to give his woman only an indifferent poor support, and so on—if I were one of those men, what you say might be true. But what deep and permanent mischief can a frail woman do a strong man?"

"There's instance after instance in history——"

"Of strong men wrecking *themselves* through various kinds of madness, including sex madness. But, my

dear Ursula, not an instance—not one—where the woman was responsible. If history were truth, instead of lies—you women might have less conceit."

"You—talking this way!" mocked Ursula.

"Meaning, I suppose, my late infatuation?" inquired he, unruffled.

"I never saw or read of a worse case."

"Am I ruined?"

"No. But why not? Because you got her. If you hadn't—" Ursula blew out a large cloud of cigarette smoke with a "Pouf!"

"If I hadn't got her," said Norman, "I'd have got well, just the same, in due time. A sick *weak* man goes down; a sick *strong* man gets well. When a man who's reputed to be strong doesn't get well, it's because he merely seemed strong but wasn't. The poets and novelists and the historians and the rest of the nature fakers fail to tell *all* the facts, dear sister. All the facts would spoil a pretty story."

Ursula thought a few minutes, suddenly burst out with, "Do you think Dorothy loves you now?"

Norman rose to go out doors. "I don't think about such unprofitable things," said he. "As long as we suit each other and get along pleasantly—why bother about a name for it?"

In the French window he paused, stood looking out with an expression so peculiar that Ursula, curious, came to see the cause. A few yards away, under a big

symmetrical maple in full leaf sat Dorothy with the baby on her lap. She was dressed very simply in white. There was a little sunlight upon her hair, a sheen of gold over her skin. She was looking down at the baby. Her expression—

Said Ursula: "Several of the great painters have tried to catch that expression. But they've failed."

Norman made no reply. He had not heard. All in an instant there had been revealed to him a whole new world—a view of man and woman—of woman—of sex—its meaning so different from what he had believed and lived.

"What're you thinking about, Fred?" inquired his sister.

He shook his head, with a mysterious smile, and strolled away.

XXII

The baby grew and thrived, as the habit is with healthy children well taken care of. Mrs. Norman soon got back her strength, her figure, and perhaps more than her former beauty—as the habit is with healthy women well taken care of. Norman's career continued to prosper, likewise according to the habit of all healthy things well taken care of. In a world where nothing happens by chance, mischance, to be serious, must have some grave fault as its hidden cause. We mortals, who love to live at haphazard and to blame God or destiny or "bad luck" for our calamities, hate to take this modern and scientific view of the world and life. But, whether we like it or not, it is the truth—and, as we can't get round it, why not accept it cheerfully and, so appear a little less ignorant and ridiculous?

During their first year at the Hempstead place the results in luxury and comfort had at no time accounted for the money it cost and the servants it employed—that is to say, paid. But Norman was neither unreasonable nor impatient. Also, in his years of experience with his sister's housekeeping, and of observation of

the other women, he had grown exceedingly moderate in his estimate of the ability of women and in his expectations from them. He had reached the conclusion that the women who were sheltered and pampered by the men of the successful classes were proficient only in those things that call for no skill or effort beyond the wagging of the tongue. He saw that Dorothy was making honest endeavor to learn her business, and he knew that learning takes time—much time.

He believed that in the end she would do better than any other wife of his acquaintance, at the business of wife and mother.

Before the baby was two years old, his belief was rewarded. Things began to run better—began to run well, even. Dorothy—a serious person, unhampered of a keen sense of humor, had taught herself the duties of her new position in much the same slow plodding way in which she had formerly made of herself a fair stenographer and a tolerable typewriter. Mrs. Lowell had helped—and Ursula, too—and Norman not a little. But Dorothy, her husband discovered, was one of those who thoroughly assimilate what they take in—who make it over into part of themselves. So, her manner of keeping house, of arranging the gardens, of bringing up the baby, of dressing herself, was peculiarly her own. It was not by any means the best imaginable way. It was even what many energetic, systematic and highly competent persons would speak contemptuously of. But it

satisfied Norman—and that was all Dorothy had in mind.

If those who have had any considerable opportunity to observe married life will forget what they have read in novels and will fix their minds on what they have observed at first hand, they will recognize the Norman marriage, with the husband and wife living together yet apart as not peculiar but of a rather common type. Neither Fred nor Dorothy had any especial reason on any given day to try to alter their relations; so the law of inertia asserted itself and matters continued as they had begun. It was, perhaps, a chance remark of Tetlow's that was the remote but efficient cause of a change, as the single small stone slipping high up on the mountain side results in a vast landslide into the valley miles below. Tetlow said one day, in connection with some estate they were settling:

"I've always pitied the only child. It must be miserably lonesome."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than he colored violently; for, he remembered that the Normans had but one child and he knew the probable reason for it. Norman seemed not to have heard or seen. Tetlow hoped he hadn't, but, knowing the man, feared otherwise. And he was right.

In the press of other matters Norman forgot Tetlow's remark—remembered it again a few days later when he was taking the baby out for an airing in the

motor—forgot it again—finally, when he took a several days' rest at home, remembered it and kept it in mind. He began to think of Dorothy once more in a definite, personal way, began to observe her as his wife, instead of as mere part of his establishment. An intellectual person she certainly was not. She had a quaint individual way of speaking and of acting. She had the marvelous changeable beauty that had once caused him to take the bit in his teeth and run wild. But he would no more think of talking with her about the affairs that really interested him than—well, than the other men of large career in his acquaintance would think of talking those matters to their wives.

But— He was astonished to discover that he liked this slim, quiet, unobtrusive little wife of his better than he liked anyone else in the world, that he eagerly turned away from the clever and amusing companionship he might have at his clubs to come down to the country and be with her and the baby—not the baby alone, but her also. Why? He could not find a satisfactory reason. He saw that she created at that Hempstead place an atmosphere of rest, of tranquility. But this merely thrust the mystery one step back. *How* did she create this atmosphere—and for a man of his varied and discriminating tastes? To that question he could work out no answer. She had for him now a charm as different from the infatuation of former days as calm sea is from tempest-racked sea—utterly different, yet fully

as potent. As he observed her and wondered at these discoveries of his, the ghost of a delight he had thought forever dead stirred in his heart, in his fancy. Yes, it was a pleasure, a thrilling pleasure to watch her. There was music in those quiet, graceful movements of hers, in that quiet, sweet voice. Not the wild, blood-heating music of the former days, but a kind far more melodious—tender, restful to nerves sorely tried by the tensions of ambition. He made some sort of an attempt to define his feeling for her, but could not. It seemed to fit into none of the usual classifications.

Then, he wondered— "What is *she* thinking of *me?*"

To find out he resorted to various elaborate round about methods that did credit to the ingenuity of his mind. But he made at every cunning cast a barren water-haul. Either she was not thinking of him at all or what she thought swam too deep for any casts he knew how to make in those hidden and unfamiliar waters. Or, perhaps she did not herself know what she thought, being too busy with the baby and the household to have time for such abstract and not pressing, perhaps not important, matters. He moved slowly in his inquiries into her state of mind because there was all the time in the world and no occasion for haste. He moved cautiously because he wished to do nothing that might disturb the present serenity of their home life. Did she dislike him? Was she indifferent? Had

she developed a habit of having him about that was in a way equivalent to liking?

These languid but delightful investigations—not unlike the pastimes one spins out when one has a long, long lovely summer day with hours on hours for luxurious happy idling—these investigations were abruptly suspended by a suddenly compelled trip to Europe. He arranged for Dorothy to send him a cable every day—"about yourself and the baby"—and he sent an occasional cabled bulletin about himself in reply. But neither wrote to the other; their relationship was not of the letter-exchanging kind—and had no need of pretense at what it was not.

In the third month of his absence, his sister Ursula came over for dresses, millinery and truly aristocratic society. She had little time for him, or he for her, but they happened to lunch alone about a week after his arrival.

"You're looking cross and unhappy," said she. "What's the matter? Business?"

"No—everything's going well."

"Same thing that's troubling Dorothy, then?"

"Is Dorothy ill?" inquired he, suddenly as alert as he had been absent. "She hasn't let me know anything about it."

"Ill? Of course not," reassured Ursula. "She's never ill. But—I've not anywhere or ever seen two people as crazy about each other as you and she."

display of feeling. They went into the house, he carrying the baby. He gave it to the nurse—and he and she were alone.

"It certainly is good to be home again," he said.

The words were the tamest commonplace. We always speak in the old stereotyped commonplaces when we speak directly from the heart. His tone made her glance quickly at him.

"Why, I believe you *are* glad," said she.

He took her hand. They looked at each other. Suddenly she flung herself wildly into his arms and clung to him in an agony of joy and fear. "Oh, I missed you so!" she sobbed. "I missed you so!"

"It was frightful," said he. "It shall never happen again."

THE END